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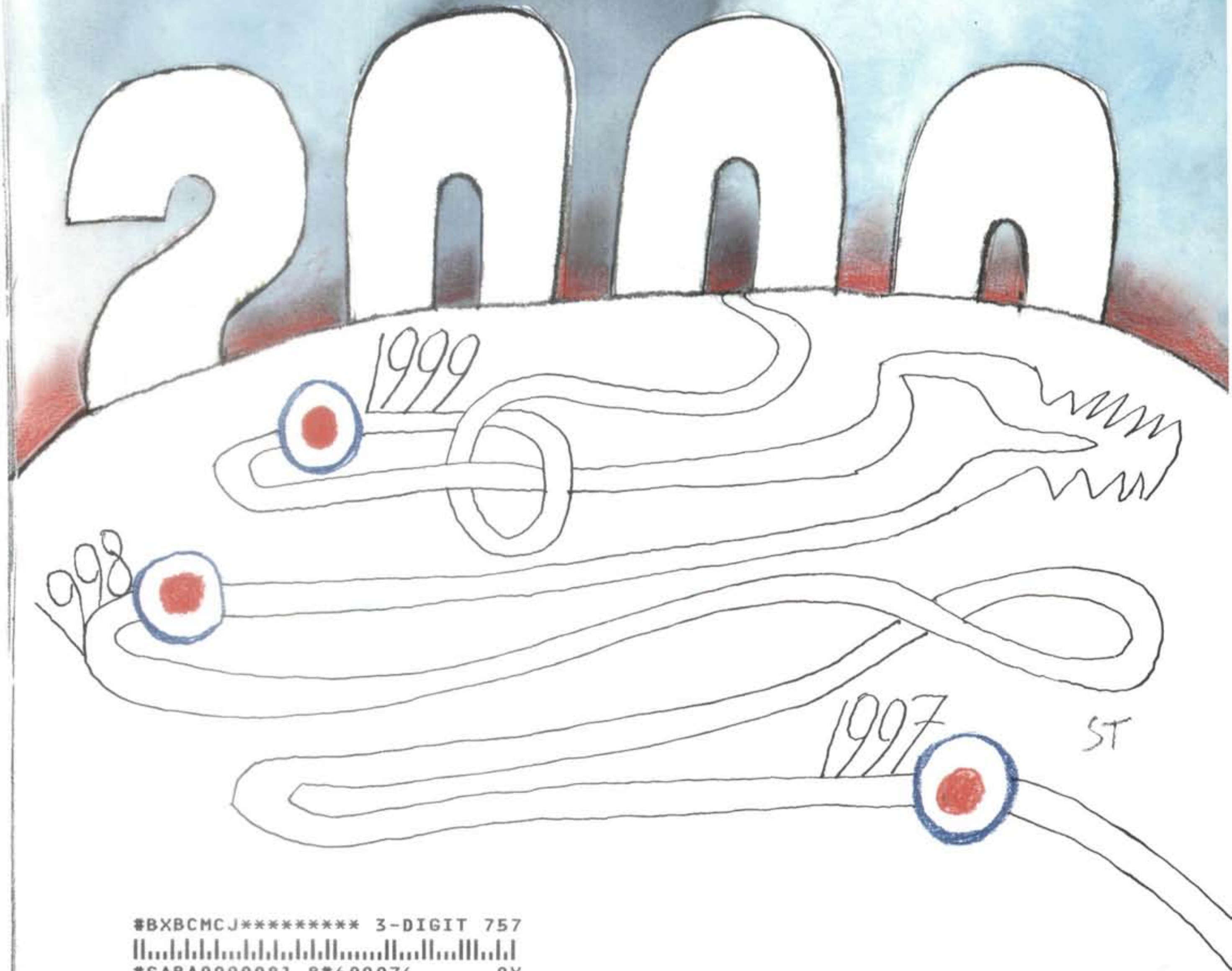

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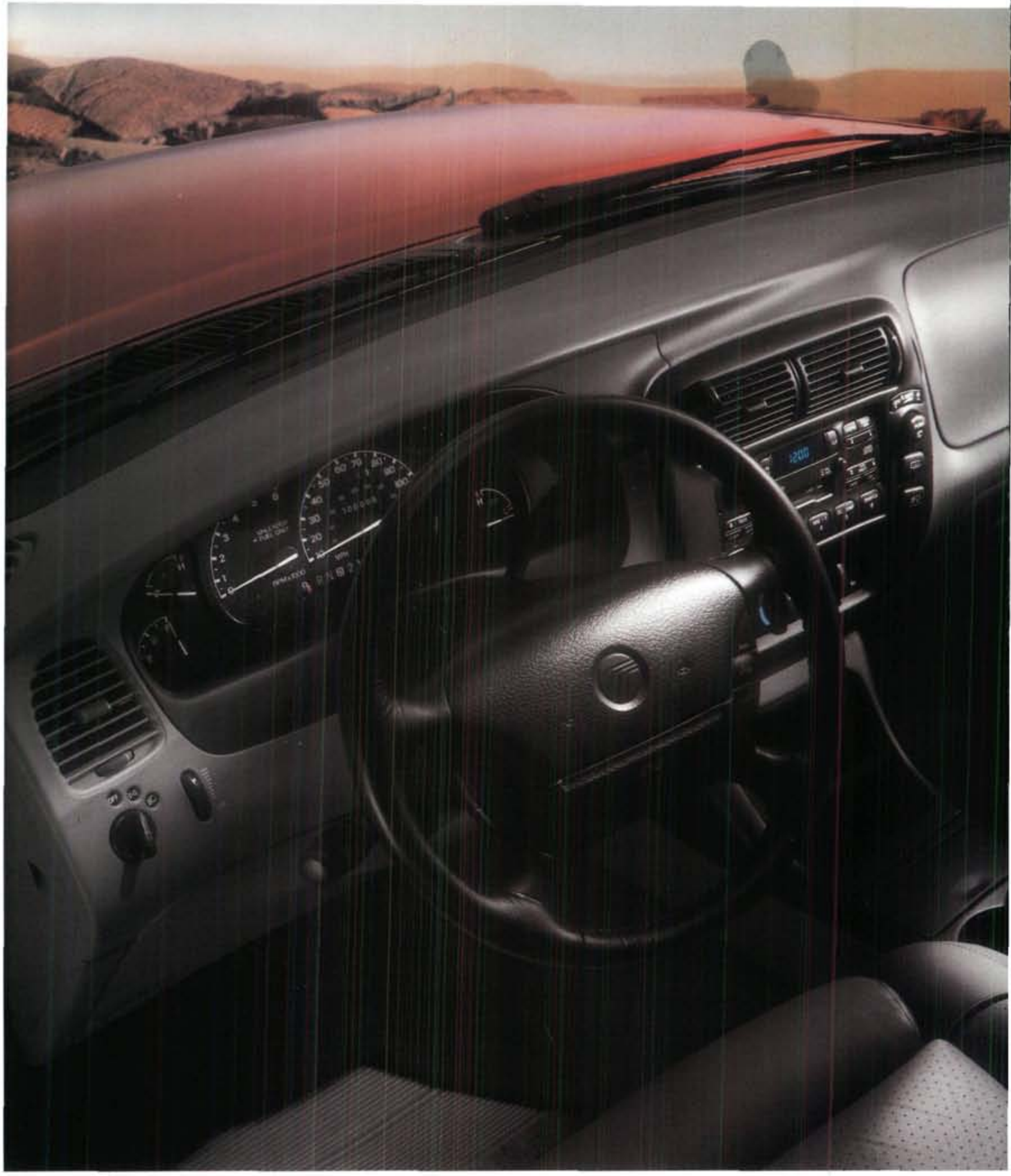

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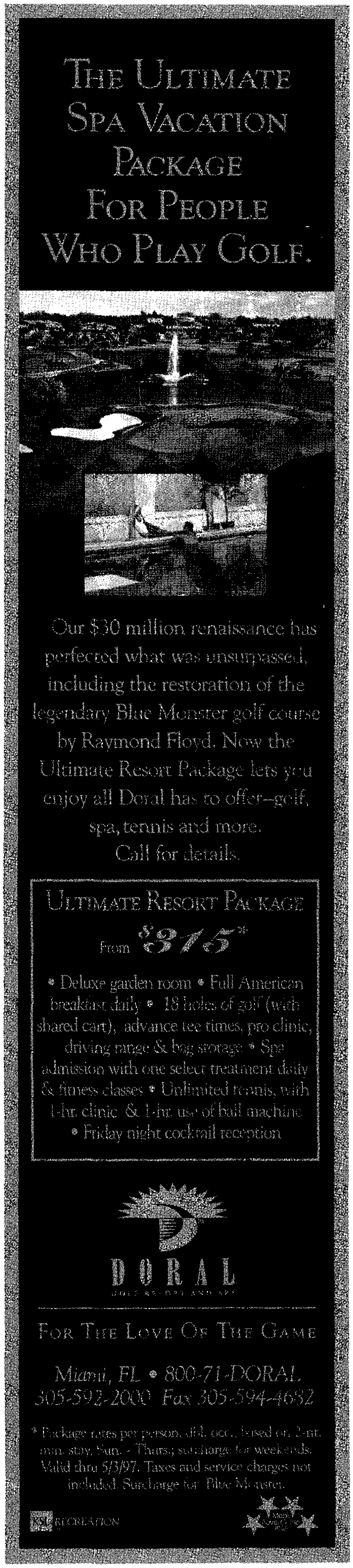

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THE NEW YORKER

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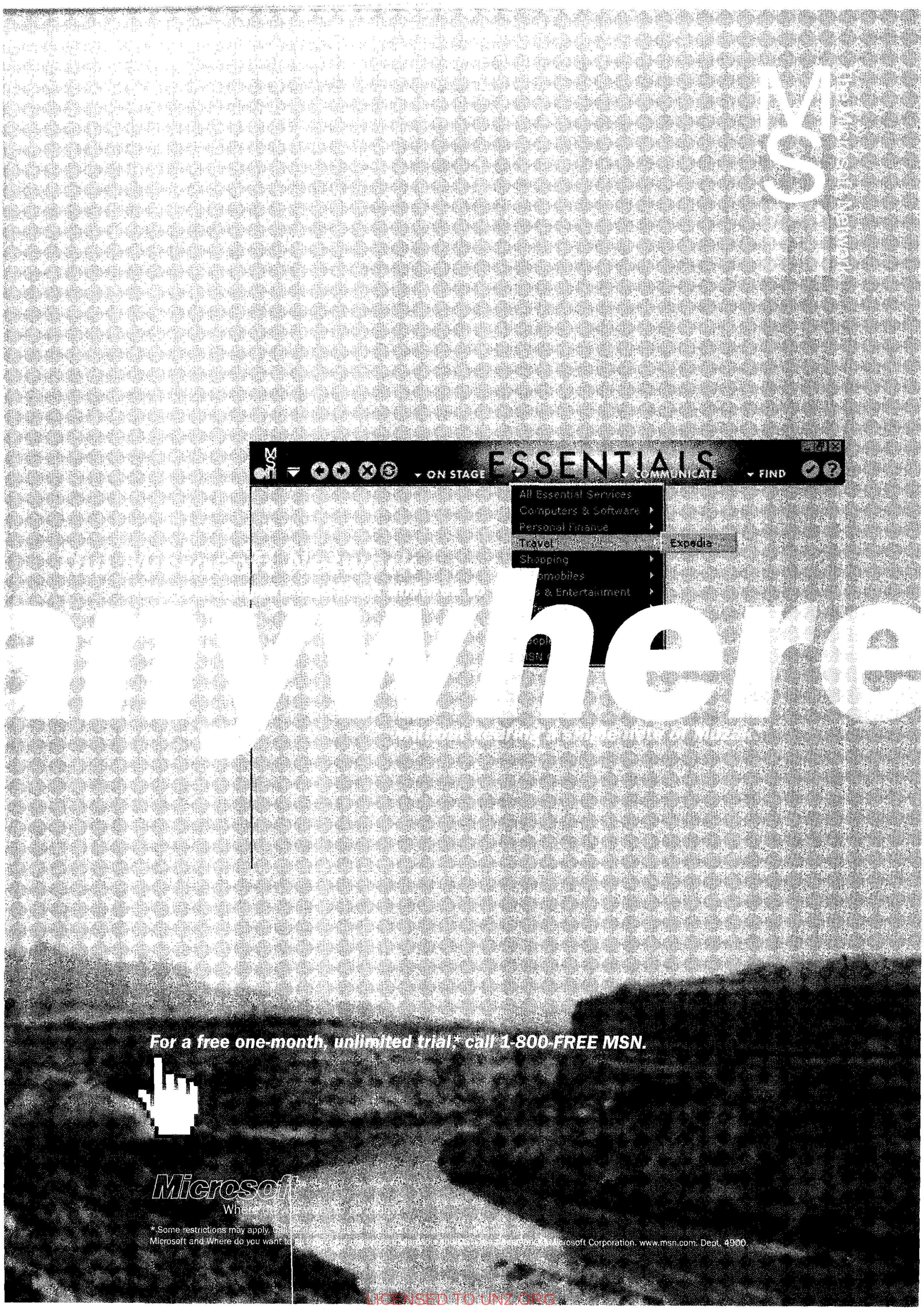
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COMMENT

THE POT PERPLEX

Mr. Soros's agenda—and the voters'.

One of the most surprising results of the November election—very nearly its *only* surprising result—was the passage in California and Arizona of ballot initiatives designed to permit sick people to use marijuana. The result went against the apparent mood of the electorate—to wit, a sort of center-right status-quo complacency, vaguely hospitable to conservative attitudes (for "family values," against leniency toward criminals, etc.) and suspicious of anything visionary. President Clinton's political comeback was generally agreed to be a consequence of his success in coöpting attitudes like these. And when Bob Dole, after weeks of flailing about, finally found an issue he thought might give him some traction, that issue turned out to be marijuana. (Mr. Dole's only effective television spot featured an old MTV clip of a smirking Mr. Clinton saying he wished he'd inhaled.) Throw in the fadeout of the Grateful Dead, and there was little reason to expect 1996 to shape up as a pot-friendly year.

Nevertheless, the initiatives passed resoundingly—by fifty-six to forty-four per cent in California, and by about two to one in Arizona. This turn of events has not been an easy one for the hard-liners—those who believe that the possession of a pinch of marijuana should remain a felony and that its cultivation or sale in larger amounts should continue to be treated as a crime on a par with, say, murder—to explain. Having long taken it for granted that the debate over drug policy pits the hardworking, taxpaying public against the out-of-touch cultural (or countercultural) élite, they now confront the possibility that they no longer monopolize the populist side of the argument.

After the shock of November 5th, the drug warriors regrouped. In December, the Senate Judiciary Committee mounted a hearing whose title—"A Prescription for Addiction? The Arizona and California Medical Drug Use Initiatives"—forthrightly dispensed with any pretense of evenhandedness. So did the witness list, which consisted of five opponents of medical use and one proponent. The committee chairman, Orrin Hatch, of Utah, began the proceedings with a statement summarizing most of the testimony that followed: the initiatives passed because voters were bamboozled; the "no" side was overwhelmed by sinister big money, espe-

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cially the sinister big money of George Soros; and, anyhow, marijuana *has* no medical use.

Senator Hatch charged, for example, that "the philanthropists of the drug legalization movement pumped millions of dollars in out-of-state soft money into stealth campaigns designed to conceal their real objective: the legalization of drugs." It's true that some of the supporters of the medical-use initiatives favor legalization, but most, including Mr. Soros, do not; and permitting sick people to use marijuana to relieve their discomfort (just as morphine, cocaine, Demerol, and many other powerful drugs are now routinely used) is a "first step" toward legalization only in the sense that movie ratings are a "first step" toward abolishing freedom of expression. The money raised by the "yes" campaigns—a little under two million dollars in California, about half that in Arizona—undoubtedly helped, but the sums were a tiny fraction of the political cash that washed over those states during the election. (In California, more than a hundred million dollars was spent on ballot initiatives alone.) In any event, few minds appear to have been changed: the polls showed that large majorities favored the initiatives before a penny was spent. The polls also showed that the voters clearly understood what they were voting on.

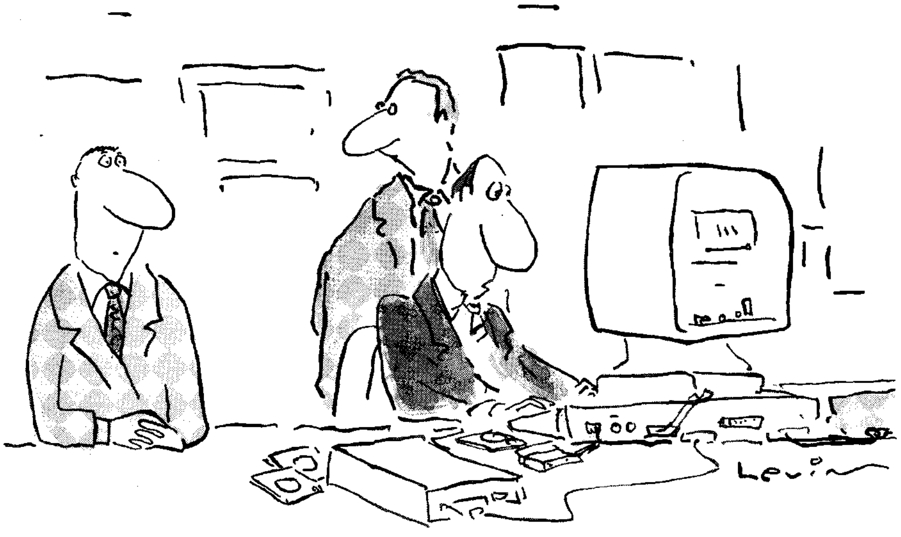
The attempt to turn Mr. Soros into a villain is especially preposterous. Mr. Hatch approvingly quoted a description of him as the "sugardaddy of the legalization movement," and one witness, Thomas A. Constantine, the administrator of the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, taxed "billionaire financier and legalization advocate George Soros" with being among those who have "cynically used the suffering and illness of vulnerable people to further their own agenda." The most excitable journalistic crusader against medical marijuana, the *Times*' A. M. Rosenthal, has gone further, explicitly likening Mr. Soros's "gobs of money" to "the fortunes manipulated by drug criminals," and his views to "preaching the benefits of slavery."

Whoa. Mr. Soros is indeed a "billionaire financier," but he is also (in quantitative terms, at least) the most generous man in the world, and he is surely one of the world's most useful citizens. He has spent, as Judith Miller reported in the *Times* the other day, "$1.1 billion, most of it since 1989 trying to transform the former Soviet bloc into thriving capitalist democracies." He is indeed from "out of state," but he can't help that: he was born in Hungary, and was a refugee from both Nazism and Communism. In a letter to the *Times* politely correcting some of Mr. Rosenthal's more pinwheel-eyed accusations, he summarized his views this way: "I am not for legalization but for a saner drug policy."

This—apart from helping the many thousands of people who have diseases like AIDS, cancer, glaucoma, and arthritis and find that smoking marijuana relieves their suffering—is Mr. Soros's "agenda." As he put it in his letter to the *Times*, "We need a free and open debate on all alternatives to current drug policies."

Mr. Hatch inadvertently hinted at why there hasn't been such a debate when, at the hearing, he offered a bit of truncated history. "Between 1987 and 1988," he said, "the D.E.A. and NORML"—the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws, a private advocacy group—"under the guidance of an administrative law judge, collected all relevant information on the alleged medical benefits of marijuana. The D.E.A. then conducted a comprehensive examination of that data in order to determine whether those allegations had merit. At the end of that study, the D.E.A. concluded that there was no legitimate medical use for marijuana." What the Senator omitted to mention was that the judge himself, Francis L. Young, had actually come to a quite different conclusion. "The evidence in this record clearly shows that marijuana has been accepted as capable of relieving the distress of great numbers of very ill people, and doing so with safety under medical supervision," Judge Young wrote. "It would be unreasonable, arbitrary and capricious for the D.E.A. to continue to stand between those sufferers and the benefits in light of the evidence." Judge Young's political superiors simply overruled him.

Is it too far-fetched to suggest that the medical-use initiatives might have been partly a protest against the bipartisan hypocrisy of baby-boomer politicians (the President, the Vice-President, the Speaker of the House, and the keynoter of the Republican National Convention, to name four) who "experimented with" marijuana in their wayward youth (did they also "experiment with" burglary and assault?) and now refuse to countenance even a discussion of amending the laws that would have sent them to prison had they been caught? Perhaps. But such a discussion is now in prospect, thanks to the voters of California and Arizona—the grass roots, so to speak. And thanks to George Soros, who stepped into the breach when Western governments responded so unimaginatively to the disintegration of Communism, and who, in response to another abdication of governmental responsibility, has stepped into the breach again. —HENDRIK HERTZBERG



"I haven't the slightest idea who he is. He came bundled with the software."

IN THE MAIL

NEW YEAR, OLD PROBLEM

In reviewing recent books on affirmative action ("Affirmative Action, Inc.," November 25th), Alan Wolfe briefly notes the "desire . . . of very large companies [to] impose costs on smaller companies to gain a competitive edge." The fact is that this nation has long been in the grip of oligopolistic capitalism, and any tactic that pits men against women or whites against blacks works to the oligopolist's advantage. It should come as no surprise to discover large corporations embracing affirmative action, even if it's just to keep the peace. However, anyone who says "that's not necessarily a bad thing" is simply naïve.

GEORGE NATALY
Harrisburg, Ore.

The Clinton Cabinet at the end of the President's first term yields an interesting perspective on affirmative action: of its fourteen members, eight, or fifty-seven per cent, were white men, who account for only thirty-seven per cent of the population—clearly an incidence of "white male privilege." But four of those white men were Jewish, so white male Gentiles (thirty-six per cent of the population) composed only twenty-eight per cent of the Cabinet, while Jewish males (one per cent) were another twenty-eight per cent. It would be outrageously bigoted to denounce this as "Jewish privilege" and demand affirmative action for Gentiles, and it is equally bigoted to dwell on the much lower level of over-representation by white men in the Cabinet (and in powerful positions in society as a whole). Most white men are poor and middle class, and it is they who, denied equal opportunity, pay for the "conscientious efforts at diversity" imposed by the wealthy, liberal élite.

HUGH MURRAY
Milwaukee, Wis.

Who can argue with Malcolm Gladwell's pessimistic statement (in "St. Nick's Beard," Comment, November 25th) that "a society where, for example, whites no longer use the word 'nigger' is not the same as a society where whites treat blacks as well as they treat each other"? But as a clinical psychologist who sees, daily, the damage done to whites by whites, in and out of families, corporations, and neighborhoods, I fear that if the best blacks can hope for is that whites will treat them as well as they treat each other, we are all in trouble.

PAUL MOOMAW
Missoula, Mont.

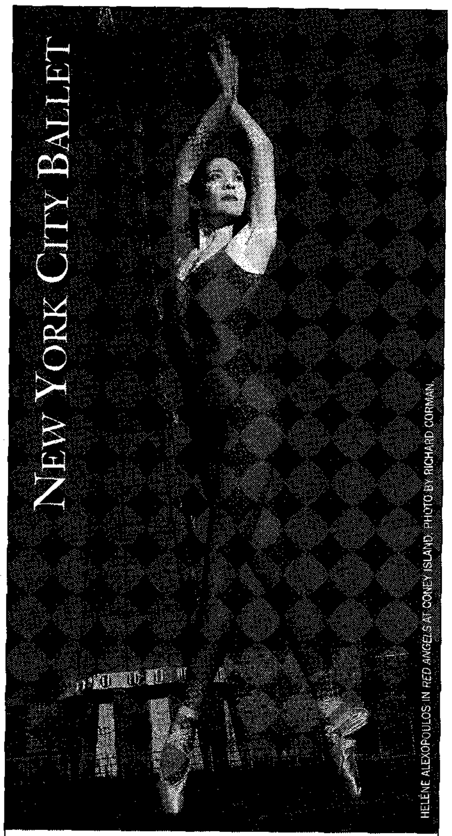
FOR YOUR VIEWING PLEASURE

Calvin Tomkins, in "Duchamp and New York" (The Art World, November 25th), defined the readymade as "a work of art created not by the hand and skill but by the mind and decision of the artist." If so, Duchamp's "Fountain," because it was signed R. Mutt and submitted to the Independents exhibition under that name, brings the identity of the artist into question and opens a train of thought which leads to the suggestion that any work of art is an act of perception, and to Duchamp's later assertion that it is the viewer who must bring that act to completion.

JOHN MENAPACE
Chapel Hill, N.C.

EDITORS' NOTE: In Elizabeth Hardwick's "Grits Soufflé" (December 23rd & 30th) we mistakenly referred to "the late Craig Claiborne." We're happy to report that he's very much alive, and we regret the error.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "In the Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.



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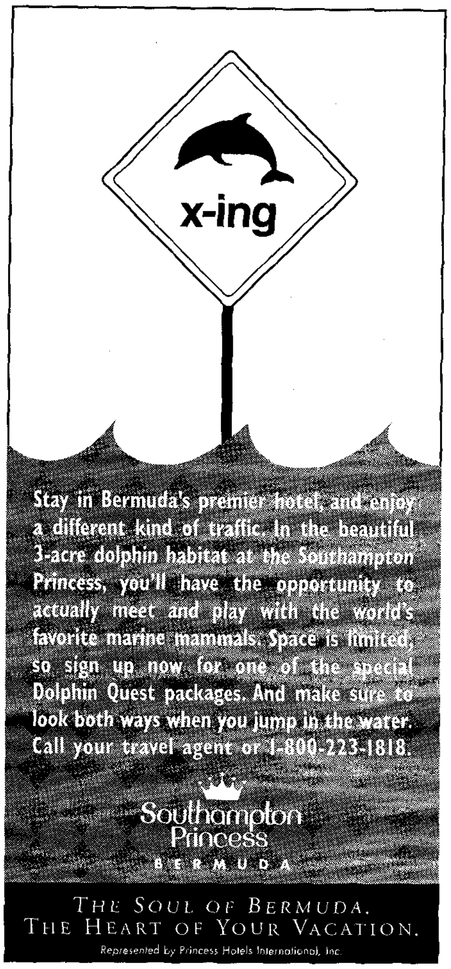

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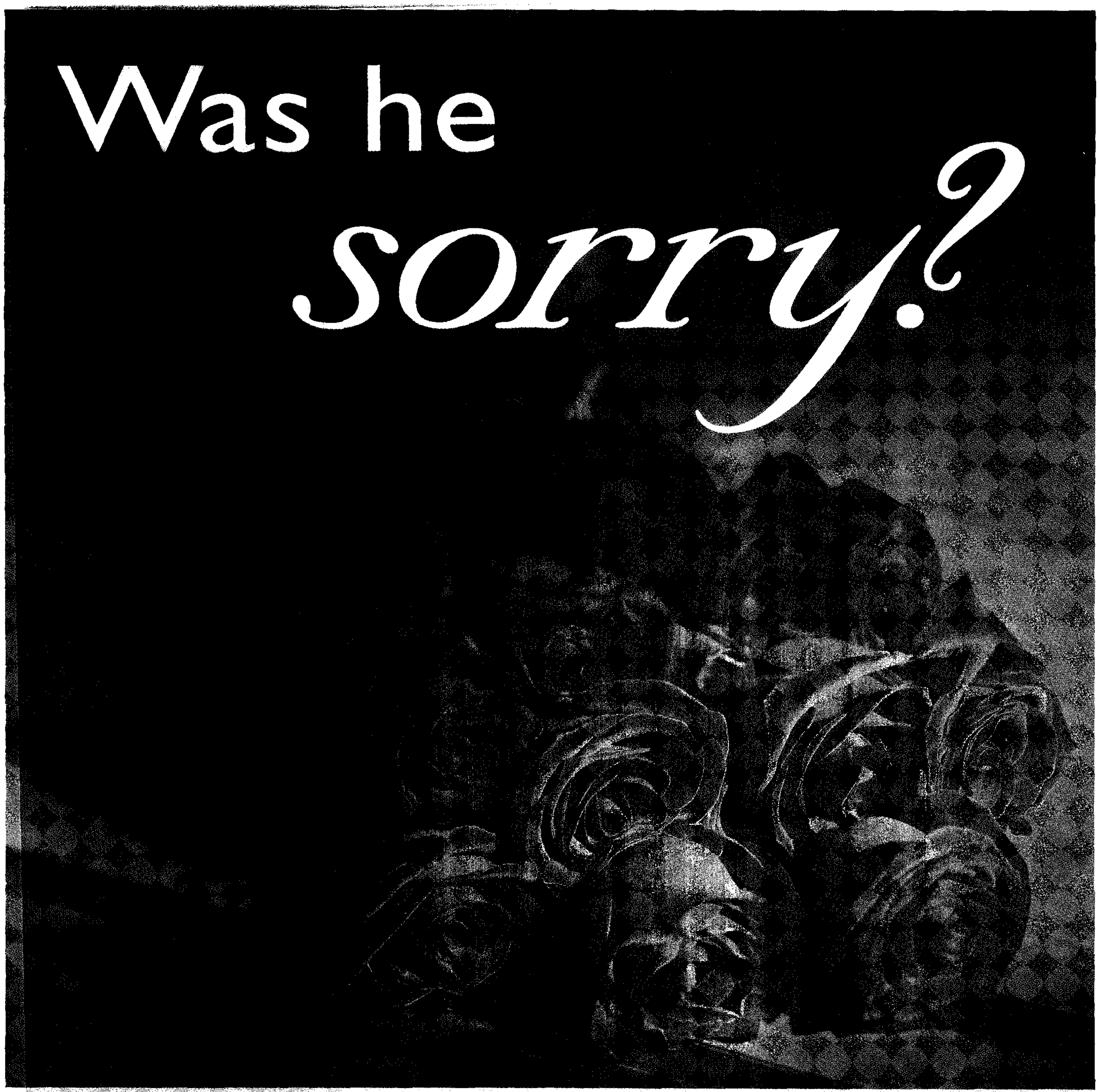

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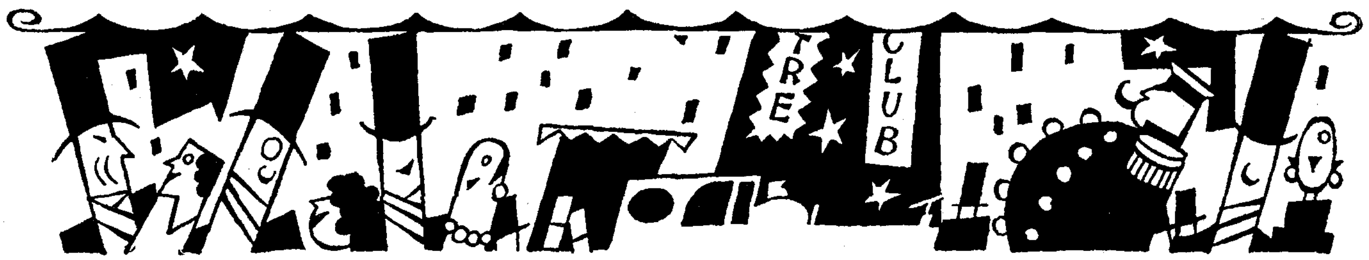


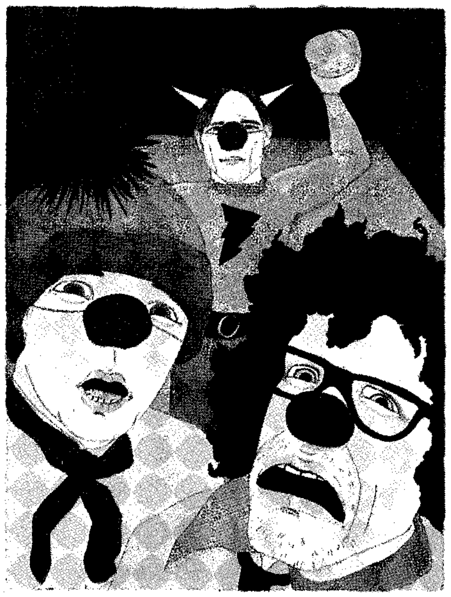
THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

El Aplauso Va por Dentro (The Applause from Within)—Repertorio Español presents a new play by Mónica Montañés, starring the Venezuelan actress Mimí Lazo as a divorcée who puts herself through a punishing exercise regime in order to regain her youthful appearance. Previews of the show, which will run in repertory with "Café con Leche," a comedy by Gloria Gonzalez, continue through Jan 5. Opens Jan. 7 at 7. The opening performance is in English; thereafter, most are in Spanish, with simultaneous English translation available. (Gramercy Arts Theatre, 138 E. 27th St. 889-2850.)

Cloud Tectonics—José Rivera's new play is a fairy-tale romance, set in Los Angeles during a torrential rainstorm, in which a pregnant woman searches for the father of her child. Directed by Tina Landau. In previews through Jan. 4. Opens Jan. 5 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)



The New Bozena: David Costabile, Kevin Isola, and Michael Dahlen.

June Moon—The Drama Dept. presents George S. Kaufman and Ring Lardner's 1929 musical comedy about a Tin Pan Alley songwriter, starring Cynthia Nixon, Becky Ann Baker, Albert Macklin, and Robert Joy. Mark Nelson is the director. Preview on Jan. 7. Opens Jan. 8 at 8 and continues through Jan 19. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 629-4656.)

Neat—Charlayne Woodard's new one-woman show, a memoir of growing up in the sixties, is a companion to her "Pretty Fire," which she performed here in 1993. Directed by Tazewell Thompson. In previews through Jan. 5. Opens Jan. 7 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

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Paved Paradise—Dance Theatre Workshop presents a brief engagement of performance artist John Kelly's solo musical work, a paean to Joni Mitchell. Opens Jan. 2 at 8 and runs through Jan. 11. (219 W. 19th St. 924-0077.)

The Red Address—A businessman's public persona belies the circumstances of his passionate private life, in a psychological drama written by David Ives and starring Kevin Anderson. In previews. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

Scapin—Bill Irwin and Mark O'Donnell's adaptation of Molière's comedy "The Rogueries of Scapin," directed by and starring Mr. Irwin. In previews. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

OPENED RECENTLY

The Barber of Seville—Michael Feingold's new translation of Beaumarchais's comedy, in a Pearl Theatre Company production. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Beat: A Subway Cop's Comedy—John DiResta, New York City transit policeman and standup comic, files a report on his subterranean workplace. (Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

A Brief History of White Music—A comic revue by Dee Dee Thomas and David Tweedy, in which an all-black cast interprets the music of Sonny and Cher, the Beach Boys, the Beatles, and other honkies. (Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Cakewalk—The subject of Peter Feibleman's play, his twenty-year relationship with Lillian Hellman, is one he's mined before, and his version of the truth is unseemly and self-serving. As Hellman, Linda Lavin gets off some good ones, but she seems almost too healthy, emotionally and physically, to play the poison-filled, self-promoting playwright. Michael Knight, the author's stand-in, is blandly charming and, unlike any writer we know, has the body of a lifeguard. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/18/96.) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

Chicago—The long-legged Ann Reinking is the ingénue Roxie Hart, a role she played at one point in the original 1975 production; Bebe Neuwirth is streamlined and sardonic as her man-killer sidekick; and the angular chorus line, in skimpy black, is as stunning and hard-edged as Bob Fosse's dances. Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed by Reinking this time around) has enough razzle-dazzle and flashes of lucid sarcasm to set the audience cheering almost from the start. The story is about a woman who gets away with murder; this pared-down concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (11/25/96) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

A Christmas Carol—Tony Randall is Scrooge and Ben Vereen is the Ghost of Christmas Present in a musical version of Dickens's holiday tale. Alan Menken wrote the score. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6741. Through Jan. 5.)

The Cocoanuts—The American Jewish Theatre's revival of the Irving Berlin–George S. Kaufman musical that starred the Marx Brothers in 1925. The songs are pleasant enough, but it's the laugh-out-loud comedy that really scores. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Family Values—A sex comedy by the Canadian playwright Carl Ritchie. Ed (Joel Fabiani) is a blustery podiatrist who longs for the days when his ex-wife (Ellen Evans) would rub his feet for hours on end; he also wishes that his son weren't, as he puts it, a "fruit," and that his daughter weren't "boinking" her boyfriend. Daniel Ettinger's set, an apartment awash in chintz, is much more tasteful than the sitcomlike proceedings. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 358-5174.)

Flipping My Wig—Charles Busch drags in the New Year with a new one-woman revue. With music by Dick Gallagher and Rusty Magee and lyrics by Mr. Busch. (WPA, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Forbidden Broadway Strikes Back!—Gerard Alessandrini cuts a satirical swath through the Great White Way in the latest edition of his musical parody. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

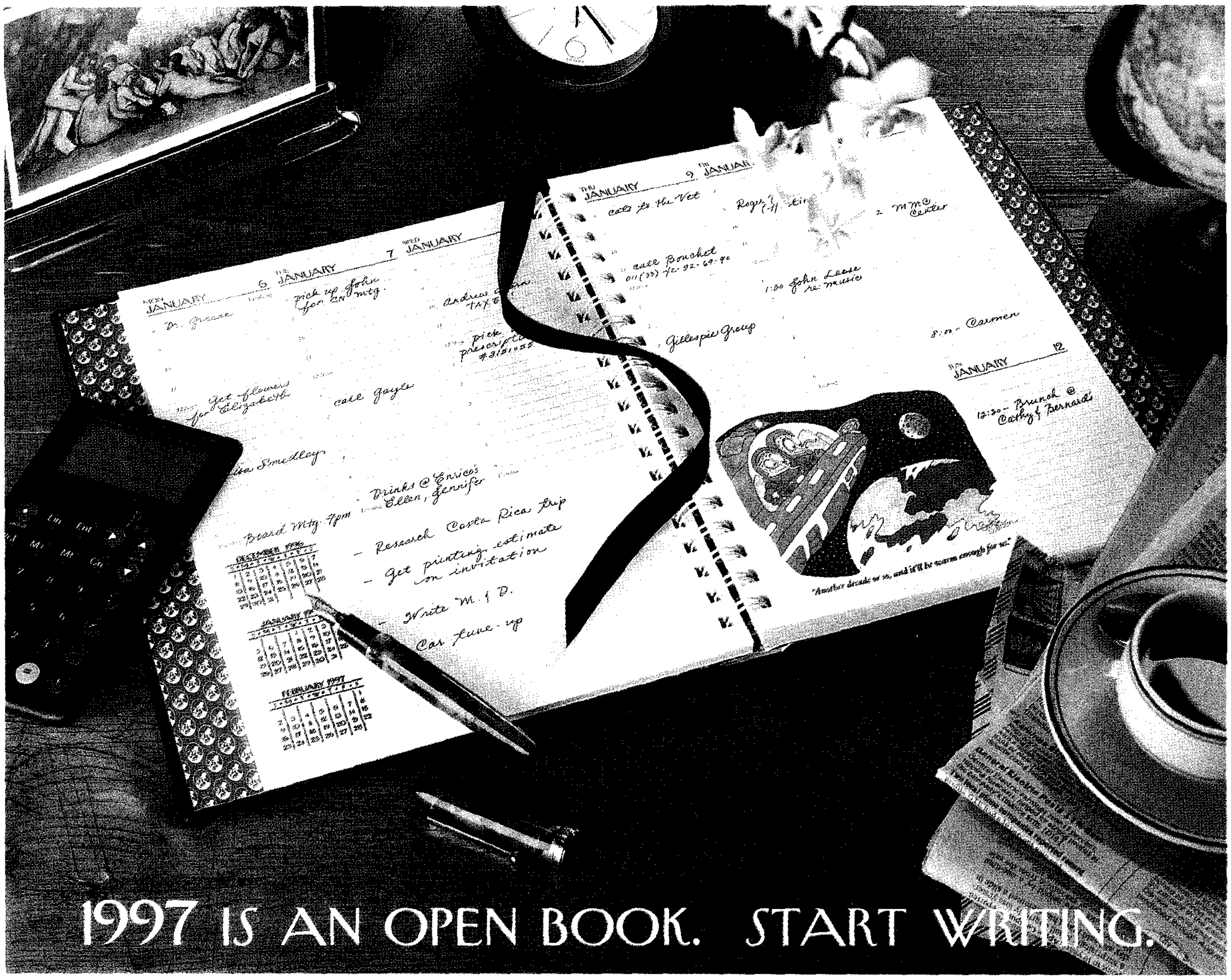
Full Gallop—The legendary, vividly eccentric fashion editor Diana Vreeland is the subject of Mary Louise Wilson and Mark Hampton's one-woman play, in which Wilson stars. Set in 1971, shortly after Vreeland was fired from *Vogue*, it's rich and resonant, with much to say about life that's worth hearing. A thoroughly satisfying evening in the theatre—very funny and very moving. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Fyvush Finkel: From Second Avenue to Broadway—Finkel sings songs and tells stories from his days in Yiddish musical comedy and performs Broadway tunes, accompanied by Ian Finkel and the Finkel Orchestra. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

The Gondoliers—A production by the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players. Jan. 2-3 at 8, Jan. 4 at 3 and 8, and Jan. 5 at 3. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III—There's just too much going on—too many speeches, too many battles, too many subplots—for Shakespeare's early trilogy to ever truly succeed onstage, and the common practice of compressing its three parts into two doesn't help. Nevertheless, the director, Karin Coonrod, who has mainly worked with the downtown ensemble Arden Party, and her very strong cast have created a vivid, intense production that also plays up Shakespeare's jokes—and so for once it's possible to care about the fate of the infant king and the causes of the Wars of the Roses. The staging is remarkably unstuffy; despite a few missteps toward overdirected cuteness, the actors' ease with one another and with the material often allows you to forget the dramaturgical baggage and simply be drawn in. Coonrod has created some particularly powerful moments, as when Joan of Arc and the just-killed English general, Talbot, silently stare at each other, or when the rebellious Duke of York makes his passionate final speech. The performances of Steven Skybell, as York, and Graham Winton, as both the Dauphin and the Duke of Gloucester, are particularly heartfelt. All in all, Coonrod's "Henry VI" may be as good a production of these misshapen plays as it's possible to mount. They run in

LARA TOMLIN



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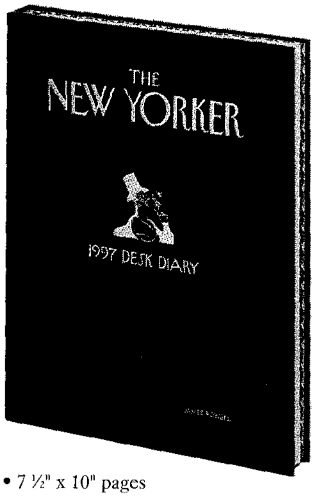

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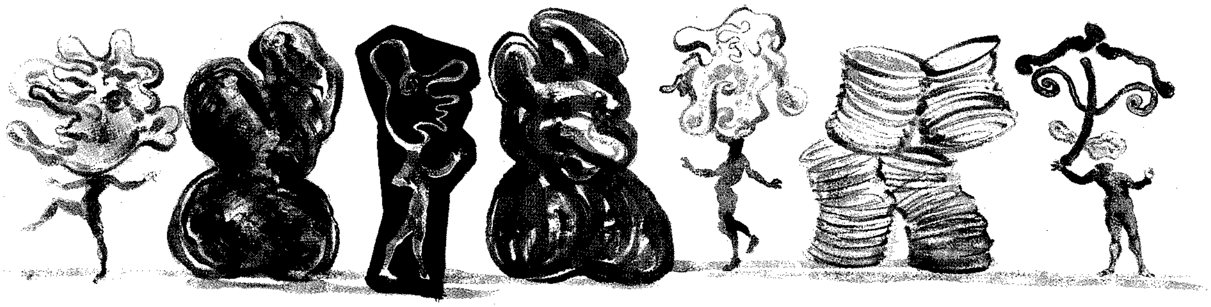
repertory as "Part 1: The Edged Sword" and "Part 2: Black Storm." (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 260-2400. Closes Jan. 5.)

Howard Crabtree's When Pigs Fly—The exuberant designer Howard Crabtree died in June, and this revue of witty, satiric songs (created with and written and directed by Mark Waldrop, and sung by a talented cast dressed in Crabtree's sequinned, feathered, mind-boggling costumes) is a fitting cap to his career. The songs purport to be parts of a larger show that keeps falling apart, leaving Howard (played by Michael West) wondering whether he should have become a chicken farmer. Clearly, chicken farming's loss was our gain. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change—In made-for-musical-theatre voices, the appealing cast of Joe DiPietro and Jimmy Roberts's crowd-pleasing revue about love and marriage sings songs examining such made-for-musical-theatre issues as parents who talk baby talk, the injustice of long ladies'-room lines, the gruesomeness of bridesmaids' dresses, and the unbearable triteness of shopping. Couples in the audience may nudge each other happily as they guess the actors' lines before they're uttered. Directed by Joel Bishoff. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

It's a Slippery Slope—With his new monologue, Spalding Gray continues to live out every neurotic New Yorker's dream: getting paid rather than charged for going on and on about his problems (and getting famous doing it). He uses learning to ski as a metaphor for his plummeting-downhill feelings about fatherhood, leaving his wife after fathering a child with another woman, the death of his own father, and other life "passages." He's so smooth and wry that you absolve him for his crappy behavior (it's part of a *learning* process), thereby absolving yourself, and that, of course, is where his appeal lies—but you still have to pay for it. Sundays and Mondays at the Vivian Beaumont. (Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 6.)



The Swiss mime troupe Mummenschanz sneaks into town for a brief engagement, at Alice Tully Hall.

PIER CONSAGRA

Jean Cocteau Repertory—Presenting Aphra Behn's Restoration comedy "The Lucky Chance." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

Joseph Gabriel: Magic on Broadway—Mr. Gabriel has performed at the Las Vegas Flamingo Hilton for the past ten years, and his feats are certainly impressive, but it's all too clear from the trappings of his act—dancers in polka-dotted boxer shorts, a sequinned Elvis—that he hasn't left Nevada behind. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Juan Darién—A production of astonishing inventiveness from Julie Taymor, whose next task is to stage Disney's "The Lion King." She and her collaborator, the composer Elliot Goldenthal, bill their work as a "carnival mass"; based on a tale by the Uruguayan writer Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937), it tells the story of a baby jaguar who becomes human and is then turned back into an animal. Scene by scene, it's as visually moving as theatre can be—Taymor's puppets and masks are highly expressive, in and of themselves and in the expert way they're manipulated, and the sets, co-created by G. W. Mercier, are teeming with life. Yet overall the piece lacks emotional content; if you were a teacher, you'd give it an A+, but you'd take the student aside and say, "Next time, try to put more *feeling* into it." (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

Late Nite Catechism—Maripat Donovan, whose face seems to hold as many expressions as the Bible has parables, offers a commanding performance as the lone nun in charge of an adult catechism class, and the audience brings as much to the performance as the script does. It's hard to keep from laughing whether you're a believer or not, though you may face a reprimand or two in the process. (St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The Maiden of Ludmir—The Folksbiene Playhouse presents a new Yiddish musical by Miriam Hoffman (book and lyrics) and John Clifton (music), based on the life of the nineteenth-century female Torah scholar. Simultaneous English or Russian translation is available. (123 E. 55th St. 755-2231.)

Making Porn—Ryan Idol has the role of the straight star Jack Hawk in Ronnie Larsen's play about the gay-porn business. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 239-6200.)

Message to Michael—*Another* comedy-drama about gay men searching for love in New York City? If that's your attitude, then Rattlestick Productions' latest staging may not be your cup of tea. All the same, the young playwright Tim Pinckney shows a keen talent for witty dialogue and the well-timed one-liner in a depiction of gay culture which is happier and gentler than some of its predecessors. (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl., at 11th St. 627-2556. Closes Jan. 5.)

Mummenschanz—The trio of mimes kicks off a twenty-fifth-anniversary retrospective tour at Lincoln Center. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Continues through Jan. 4.)

The New Bozena—Three very funny young clowns, all alums of N.Y.U.'s graduate acting program, who approach life with hilarious innocence and touching wonder. One quivers with fear and timidity, one is gape-mouthed and a little slow, and one has a catlike curiosity—although a cat probably wouldn't try out a staple gun on its tongue. Watching them is like watching babies discover the world. (11/18/96) (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

Nine Armenians—Leslie Ayvazian's play is exactly what its title advertises: an extended-family drama in which nine Armenian-Americans cope with assimilation and remember their history. It's a well-worn American-immigrant tale, complete with kids who don't care about the past until a climactic revival of tradition which brings everyone together, but it's humorously told and superbly acted by a cast that includes Michael Countryman, Sophie Hayden, and Kathleen Chalfant. George Mgrdichian's traditional mandolin music perfectly sets the tone, and Santo Loquasto's simple, beautiful set effortlessly indicates locales that range from a grandmother's living room to a thirteenth-century church. Lynne Meadow directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Jan. 12.)

No Way to Treat a Lady—The York Theatre Company begins an all-musical season—its first ever—with a comedy-thriller based on the William Goldman novel of the same title, about a detective in pursuit of an actor turned murderer. Book, music, and lyrics by Douglas J. Cohen. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes Jan. 19.)

Old Wicked Songs—Jon Marans' well-written piece of sentimental sanctimony asks the question: Can a blocked, arrogant twenty-five-year-old pianist (Justin Kirk) find wisdom under the tutelage of a suicidal singing teacher (Hal Robinson) who survived the Holocaust? (The answer is yes.) (9/16/96) (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Once Upon a Mattress—Gerald Gutierrez directs Sarah Jessica Parker in a revival of the 1959 musical, based on "The Princess and the Pea." (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

O Solo Mio Festival—The New York Theatre Workshop's solo-performance festival this year features works by Emmett Foster and Dael Orlandersmith. (79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Jan. 5.)

Permanent Brain Damage (Risk It! Risk It!)—The latest musings on human consciousness from Richard Foreman and his Ontological-Hysteric Theatre. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

Present Laughter—As the monumentally egotistical West End star Garry Essendine, Frank Langella keeps the core of Noël Coward's 1939 comedy of bad manners alive with a full-tilt assault on the character's outrageousness. Unfortunately, the director, Scott Elliott, seems to think that he's liberating Coward by turning the play into a bisexual romp. But he orchestrates some delicious farce moments, and the supporting players are funny even when Elliott is leading them down blind alleys. (11/25/96) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

The Rehearsal—If you have a yen to see a bunch of disparate acting styles on stage at the same time, this production of Jean Anouilh's 1963 farce is for you. Nicholas Martin's rather loosey-goosey direction ends up making a porridge of the play, when a glittering crystal is what's wanted. Though nothing can destroy Anouilh's cleverness, it's frustrating to watch such good actors as Frances Conroy and Roger Rees at anything less than their best. The cast includes David Threlfall and Kathryn Meisle; Jeremy Sams did the translation. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes Jan. 10.)

The Santaland Diaries—The writer David Sedaris has turned his piece about working as an elf at Macy's one Christmas into a monologue, but the material works much better on the page than it does on the stage. Timothy Olyphant is the sardonic elf; Joe Mantello directed this little slip of a show. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

Sharps, Flats & Accidentals—Dressed like Austrian counts and armed with a brand of humor that time seems to have forgotten, the Flying Karamazov Brothers are back in town, executing amazing feats of juggling with manic "Night at the Opera" charm. This time around, the focus is music, and the foursome performs—while juggling—everything from Bach to W. C. Handy to Cole Porter. It's a gas for both kids and their parents. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 1.)

Tooth of Crime (Second Dance)—Sam Shepard's new version of his 1972 drama about a rock star past his prime, with a new star, Vincent

D'Onofrio, and new music, by T-Bone Burnett. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

The Waste Land—Sitting in a dark, dilapidated old theatre, we hear footsteps from the back of the house; Fiona Shaw climbs the stairs to the bare stage, twists in a light bulb, heads back toward the stairs—but then, as if deciding that speech is her only remaining option, she begins to recite. And, with the assistance of Deborah Warner's direction and Jean Kalman's minimal, evocative lighting, she makes a rich tapestry of T. S. Eliot's monumental poem, smoothly and believably animating the inhabitants of its "Unreal City" and giving us a glimpse of the whole from which these fragments have fallen. (Liberty, 234 W. 42nd St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 5.)

What's a Nice Country Like You Doing in a State Like This?—Cary Hoffman and Ira Gasman's updated version of their 1973 revue satirizing society and politics. (Theatre Row Theatre, 424 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 5.)

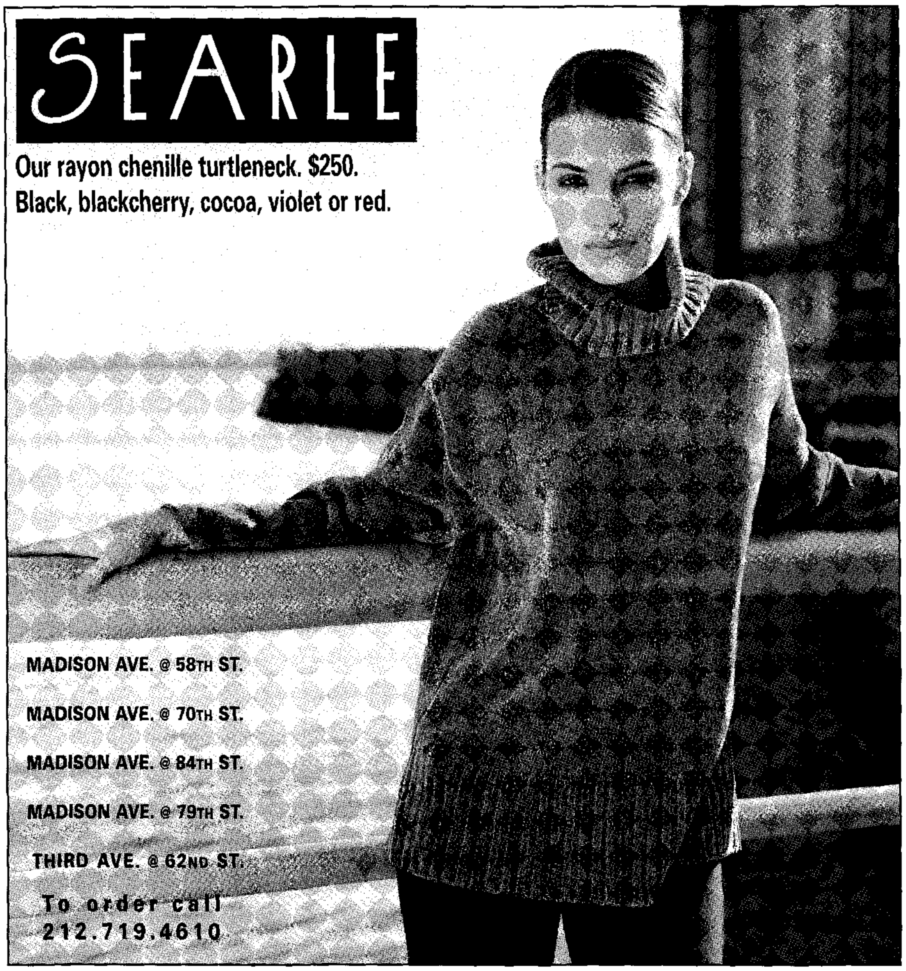
LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **COWGIRLS:** Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. (Closes Jan. 5.) . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **AN IDEAL HUSBAND:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LOVE THY NEIGHBOR:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 5.) . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 4.) . . . **SHOW BOAT:** Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. (Closes Jan. 5.) . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **SUNSET BOULEVARD:** Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—The company concludes its annual "Nutcracker" enchantment (Jan. 2 at 6, Jan. 3 at 8, Jan. 4 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 5 at 1 and 5) and returns to repertory (Jan. 7 at 8) with "Concerto Barocco," "Kammermusik No. 2," "Sonatine," and "Symphony in Three Movements." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. The season continues through March 2.)

Momix—At fifteen, this Connecticut-based Pilobolus offspring is sexier than its progenitor, and, like many teens growing up within range of a Red Sox broadcast, it's a little obsessed with the national pastime. In the final week of its Joyce Theatre season, the company presents "Baseball," a full-length escapade whose seventeen segments (plus epilogue) are, in fact, hit and miss, and include a Neanderthal game of catch, a Botticelli dream sequence with a nymph emerging from a blown-up fielder's glove, and, perhaps for the bleacher bums, a spritely Motown routine for dancing beer cans. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 2-3 at 8, Jan. 4 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 5 at 2 and 7:30.)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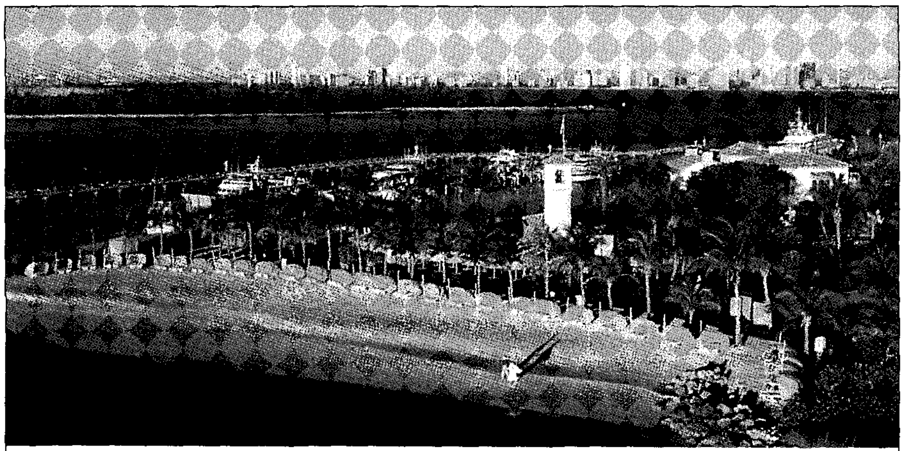
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FISHER ISLAND CLUB

NIGHT LIFE

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through Jan. 4: Vocalist **ANDREA MARCOVICCI** wraps up an extended run in the woody nook known as the Oak Room. Starting Jan. 7: Guitarist-vocalist **JOHN PIZZARELLI.** Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The legendary club has a new address and bigger digs, and Charlie Parker's name still shines proudly on the awning and on the banner behind the stage. The black-and-white photographs of jazz greats are for sale, so you can really savor the memories. Jan. 1: The **KELVIN QUINCE** band. Jan. 2-4: Drummer **JOE CHAMBERS** and his quintet—including pianist **KENNY BARRON,** saxophonists **BOB BERG** and **DONALD HARRISON,** and bassist **RUFUS REID.** Jan. 5: Guitarist **JOHN ABERCROMBIE** and bassist **GEORGE MRAZ.** Jan. 6: The **JACK WILKINS** trio. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jan. 1-5: Singer **PATTI AUSTIN** and pianist **ALEX BUGNON.** Jan. 7-12: Start the year off right with a visit to **DR. JOHN,** whose gruff, back-porch take on R. & B. has been much imitated but never matched. Since this house call is at a pricey jazz outpost, expect more serious piano work and a little less howling at the moon. Dining.

Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. (691-6174)—A New Orleans-style restaurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues Band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz Band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, for a two-month stint starting Jan. 7—holy fingernails, Batman—the amazing **EARTHA KITT.** Kitt is still a fierce and funny performer with a feral grip on her audience. She inhabits her songs: when she sings "I Wanna Be Evil," you don't doubt for a second that she could spit tacks. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** is in attendance.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A cool, sumptuous piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel, with twenty-two-foot-high ceilings, a long backlit bar stocked with single-malt Scotch, and fine jazz seven nights a week. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 5: Rhythm and blues has arrived in the canny and capable hands of **RUTH BROWN.** She has assembled a topflight quartet, all of whom play solid R. & B. while she talks about her career triumphs, thanks her doctor, thanks someone who helped pay for her doctor, begs the critics in the audience to give her good reviews, makes allusions to her dress size, her age, and how long it takes her makeup man to do her face, introduces some flamenco dancer sitting ringside, and touches on other smart things and people too numerous to mention. Then she's liable to launch into an inspired version of Duke Ellington's "I'm a Lucky So and So." After that may come a few standards, a couple of her old hits, an Eric Clapton song, a cut from her Broadway star turn, "Black and Blue"—whatever. She is talented and true to her art. She hits all her notes, gets all her laughs, is wise and eclectic and vulnerable without being mawkish, and she knows how to put together a real night-club act. An impressive show. Starting Jan. 7: The **GATO BARBIERI** quintet. The Argentinean tenor saxophonist has a sensuous tone and a résumé that includes everything from avant-garde work in the sixties to composing the score for "Last Tango in Paris." Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 4: Saxophonist **MARK WHITECAGE** and his quartet. Jan. 5: **EHRAN ELISHA'S KINETIC MUSIC** ensemble has the house.

Le Madeleine, 403 W. 43rd St. (246-2993)—Every Sunday evening, guitar great **GENE BERTONCINI** lights up this cozy Hell's Kitchen bistro with his simmering melodicism and chordal grace.

Maxim's, 680 Madison Ave. (751-5111)—In 1985, Pierre Cardin spent millions to open this mock-nineteenth-century bistro, which features stained glass, bevelled mirrors, and inlaid ceilings. But the eighties ended, and the club went dark for five years. A new management has revamped the menu, lowered the prices, and "done away with the dress code." Dining.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—A plush, old-fashioned night club, sixty-five floors above it all, complete with Art Deco fixtures, intimate glitter, and a panoramic view as dizzying as the tab. Hear her roar: **HELEN REDDY** winds up her stay on Jan. 4. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Sean Mahony and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night. Jan. 1: The **SAM YAHEL** quartet, featuring **ERIC ALEXANDER.** Yahel mans the electric organ; Alexander's a bruising tenor saxophonist. Together they keep the great jazz-blues-funk mélange of the sixties alive. Jan. 2: **MYRON WALDEN** is part of the fresh crop of young alto saxophonists which has seemingly bloomed overnight. Like Steve Wilson and Sherwin Irby, he's a rousing talent worth keeping your eye on. Jan. 3-4: The **JIM MIGNARELLI** quintet. Jan. 7: The **FRANCK AMSALLEM** trio. Stocked to the gills with exciting new players, the **JASON LINDNER BIG BAND** now holds court every Monday, joining two other clubs' big bands—the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra and Maria Schneider's Visiones ensemble—as start-of-the-week jazz institutions.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. Through Jan. 5: The **NAT ADDERLEY** quintet. Starting Jan. 7: The **LOUIS HAYES** group. Hayes doesn't get the press that his peers routinely garner, but he remains one of the greatest hard-bop drummers. With experience as the rhythmic muscle for Cannonball Adderley and Oscar Peterson, he knows how to keep a band solid and swinging. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—This legendary tourist haven makes serious jazz fans welcome in the Chestnut Room, which resembles a hunting lodge and is every bit as over-the-top as the rest of the establishment. Dining.

Village Gate, 240 W. 52nd St. (307-5252)—Jan. 2-4 and Jan. 7: Possessed of the most mellifluous tone, fluid phrasing, and effortless swing of any clarinettist since Benny Goodman left us, **KEN PEPLOWSKI** is also an impressive in-the-tradition tenor saxophonist. On his recent "The Other Portrait," the eclectic Peplowski dips into the classical repertoire, but this gig should be pure—and exhilarating—mainstream jazz. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The world's most famous jazz club is also the last place in town that still looks, smells, and feels like a classic jazz club—subterranean, smoky, and thick with the spirits of past masters. Through Jan. 4: **DR. MICHAEL WHITE'S ORIGINAL LIBERTY JAZZ BAND OF NEW ORLEANS.** Let purists debate the validity of this outfit's approach to the music of Armstrong, Morton, and Dodds: White's band positively revels in collective improvisation, counterpoint, and the two-beat stomp. Its glee turns history into something vividly sensual. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—A tiny, low-key supper club where the jazz, like the Spanish-American cuisine, can take on a spicy, multicultural flavor. The **MARIA SCHNEIDER ORCHESTRA** is now in its second year of Monday nights here; the composer and arranger's big band has settled nicely into institutional status.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. Through Jan. 4: Piano, bass, and guitar with **JOHN BUNCH, JAY LEONHART, AND BUCKY PIZZARELLI.**

ROCK, ETC.

Blarney Star, 43 Murray St. (732-2873)—Home to fine Irish music every Friday night.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—Decent sight lines, great greasy food, prodigiously talented waitresses, and a consistent roster of high-quality acts. Jan. 3: **BUSTER POINDEXTER AND HIS BANSHEES OF BLUE.** Jan. 4: A battle of blues bands—the **REKOOPERATORS,** from New York City, and **MIKE HENDERSON AND THE BLUEBLOODS,** from Nashville.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—**COME** is here on Jan. 3.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Dedicated to the music of the Windy City. Jan. 3-4: New York blues-rock fixture **POPA CHUBBY.**

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is SqueezeBox, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Misstress Formika.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. S. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the

WALTER MINUS

audience. The fabulous **DRESSING ROOM DIVAS** entertain every Saturday night.

FEZ, 380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)—A comfortable neo-Moroccan bar hidden inside the Time Café. The downstairs room, where bands perform, is a fine spot to take in a show. The **MINGUS BIG BAND** still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

THE GREATEST BAR ON EARTH, 1 World Trade Center (524-7000)—Hyperbole, perhaps, but it's certainly the highest. And Thursdays through Saturdays you'll find live music, dancing, and dining, a hundred and seven stories above the city.

IRVING PLAZA, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—This sprawling two-floor establishment has been all things to all people: meeting hall, rock club, jazz club, Off Broadway theatre. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a dance that involves a lot of whirling and the occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

• •

RADIO WEST 43RD STREET

Thirty favorites from our 1996 album-oriented playlist.

EMPEROR TOMATO KETCHUP, Stereolab (Elektra).
IT'S HEAVY IN HERE, Eric Matthews (Sub Pop).
VIVA! LA WOMAN, Cibo Matto (Warner Bros.).
WALKING WOUNDED, Everything but the Girl (Atlantic).
ODELAY, Beck (DGC).
THE SCORE, Fugees (Columbia).
EXCERPTS FROM A LOVE CIRCUS, Lisa Germano (4AD).
VIVADIXIESUBMARINETRANSMISSIONPLOT, Sparklehorse (Capitol).
FASHION NUGGET, Cake (Capricorn).
BEAUTIFUL FREAK, Eels (Dreamworks).
GIRLSTOWN: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK (Mercury).
A FEW SMALL REPAIRS, Shawn Colvin (Columbia).
INTRODUCING GORKY'S ZYGOTIC MYNCI (Mercury).
RED HOT + RIO, Various Artists (Verve).
MAXWELL'S URBAN HANG SUITE, Maxwell (Columbia).
PEACE AT LAST, The Blue Nile (Warner Bros.).
MODES OF TRANSPORTATION VOL. 1, Spookey Ruben (TVT).
DUNCAN SHEIK, Duncan Sheik (Atlantic).
NO CODE, Pearl Jam (Epic).
DOWN ON THE UPSIDE, Soundgarden (A&M).
1977, Ash (Reprise).
MR. HAPPY GO LUCKY, John Mellencamp (Mercury).
GONE AGAIN, Patti Smith (Arista).
MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE "TRAINSPOTTING" (Capitol).
AENIMA, Tool (Zoo).
FIRST BAND ON THE MOON, The Cardigans (Mercury).
NINE OBJECTS OF DESIRE, Suzanne Vega (A&M).
TIDAL, Fiona Apple (Clean Slate/Work).
MASSACHUSETTS, Scud Mountain Boys (Sub Pop).
SECOND TOUGHEST IN THE INFANTS, Underworld (WaxTrax!/TVT).

MERCURY LOUNGE, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 3: Topnotch singer-songwriter **KEVIN SALEM** has played guitar for Freedy Johnston and Yo La Tengo, and his last record, "Soma City," a collection of forlorn folk-rock gems, was a certified critics' favorite. Jan. 6: **PULL MY DAISY.**

PADDY REILLY'S MUSIC BAR, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—**BLACK 47** plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for "big sky") performs for a hearty following on Fridays.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. Dining.

WEBSTER HALL, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Masterpieces in Little: Portrait Miniatures from the Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II." Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ The largest exhibition of the master landscape painter Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot mounted in more than a hundred years. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Eugène Cuvelier, Photographer in the Circle of Corot," an exhibit of salted-paper prints from the eighteen-fifties and -sixties. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ The cynosure of a large exhibition surveying the career of the Scottish architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868-1928) must certainly be the restored Ladies' Luncheon Room from Miss Cranston's Ingram Street Tea Rooms, in Glasgow. Through Feb. 16. . . . ¶ "Queen Nefertiti and the Royal Women" presents narrative reliefs and sculptures from Egypt's Amarna period (1353-1336 B.C.). Through Feb. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—The Jasper Johns retrospective features two hundred and twenty-five works—paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures—and naturally includes a few flags, targets, numerals, and cross-hatch patterns. Through Jan. 21. . . . ¶ Two installations by the Toronto art collective General Idea: "One Day of AZT" (1991), a set of five human-size fibreglass-and-vinyl pills, on the floor; and "One Year of AZT" (1991), three hundred and sixty-five sets of pills, arranged in months, on the walls. Through Jan. 7. . . . ¶ "New Photography 12" features work by Richard Billingham, Thomas Demand, Osamu Kanemura, Sophie Ristelhueber, Georgina Starr, and Wolfgang Tillmans. Through Feb. 4. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"Ellsworth Kelly," a large survey of the artist's paintings, sculptures, works on paper, and photographs. Through Jan. 19. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"The Hugo Boss Prize: 1996." The Guggenheim clearly had Britain's prestigious Turner Prize in mind when it established this award, named for the German menswear designer, and there can be no denying the merit of the inaugural-year short list: Laurie Anderson, Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Cai Guo Qiang, Stan Douglas, and Yasumasa Morimura. The artists were judged on the basis of their work as a whole, rather than on the strength of their installations here. That's a good thing for Barney, the winner, who bothered to submit only a few stills and props from his splendid video "Cremaster 1." In the show, however, Antoni comes off best, with "Slumber," a complex piece including a bed in which the artist sleeps each night, an electroencephalograph that records her brain-wave activity, and a loom on which she weaves her EEG patterns into a blanket: a compelling rereading of the myth of Penelope. The effect is riveting. Through Jan. 19. . . . ¶ "Max Beckmann in Exile." Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—"Making Mischief," an excellent exhibition chronicling the Dada invasion of New York, from the Great War through the early twenties. Chief among its attractions is a significant selection of pieces by Marcel Duchamp, including a painstaking reconstruction (recently made by Swedish scholars) of his masterpiece "The Bride

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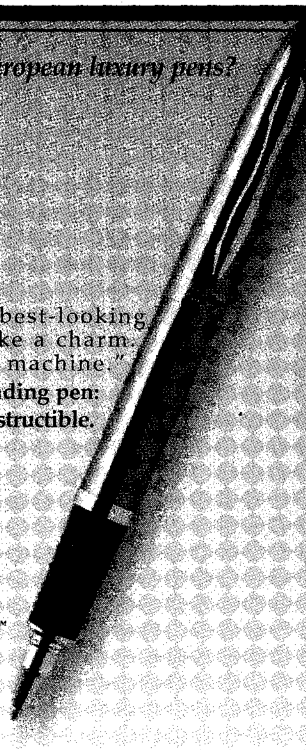

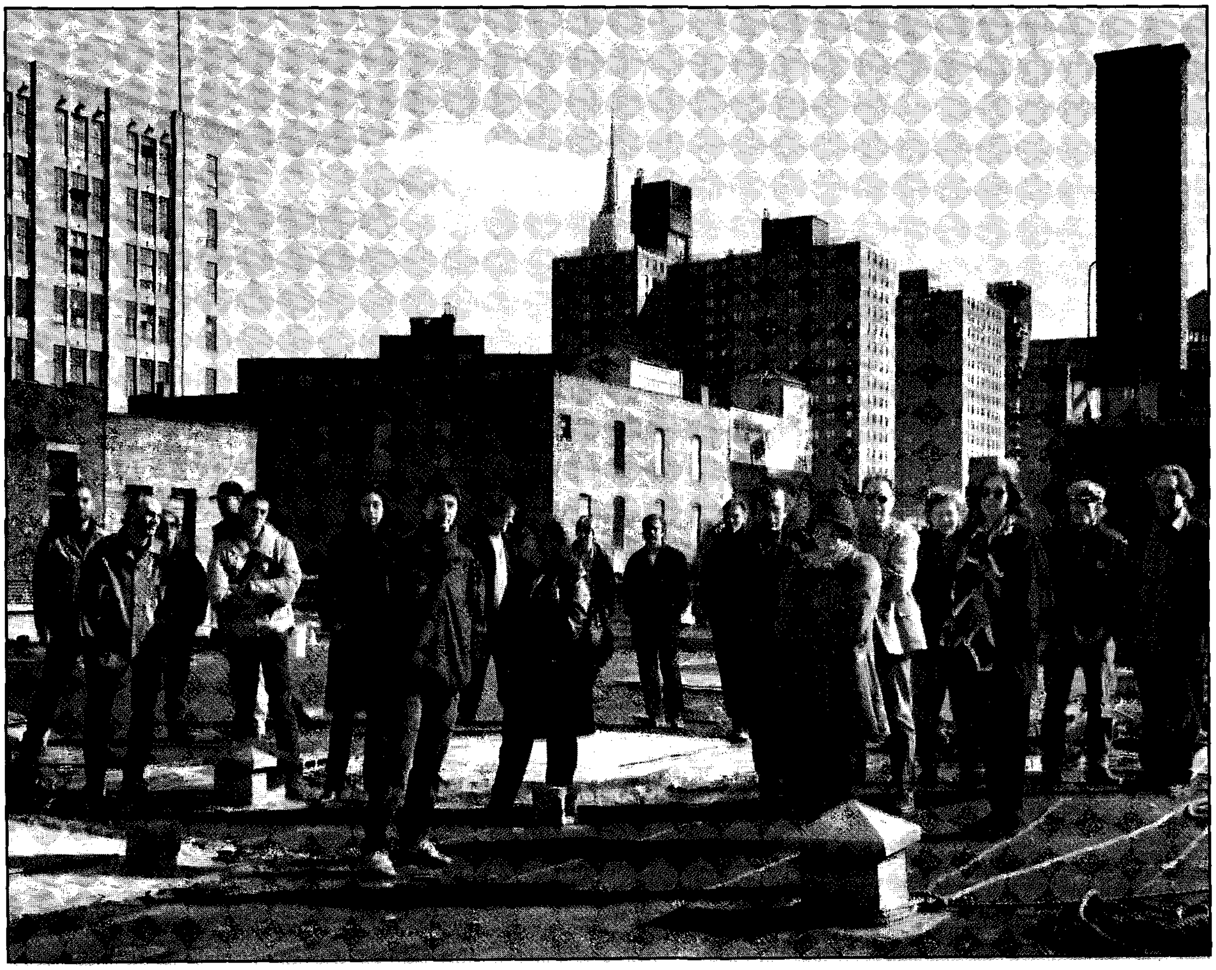

CATS ON A COLD TAR ROOF: *Nineteen artists on the roof of 513-23 West 24th Street, the new thirty-thousand-square-foot home of three galleries—Barbara Gladstone, Matthew Marks (its second Chelsea space), and Metro Pictures—that represent them. From left: Nayland Blake, Brice Marden, Robert Longo, Gary Simmons, Vinoodh Matadin, Inez Van Lamsweerde, John Miller, Matt Mullican, Nan Goldin, Louise Lawler, Peter Cain, David Armstrong, Vito Acconci, Cindy Sherman, Ronald Jones, Gary Hill, Laurie Simmons, Matthew Barney, Tony Oursler.*

ERIC BOMAN

Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even," also known as the "Large Glass." Through Feb. 23. . . . ¶ "I'll Be Your Mirror," a retrospective of Nan Goldin's disturbing photographs of the gritty, glamorous downtown life. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ "Views from Abroad: European Perspectives on American Art 2." Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The renovated Hall of Vertebrate Origins is open, its dropped ceiling removed to reveal Calvert Vaux's skylit design. All the better to see the dunkleosteus, a sixteen-foot-long hanging model of an armored fish, based on the four-foot-long fossil of its head, with self-sharpening jawbones. . . . ¶ An exhibit of the Codex Leicester, Leonardo's manuscript on such scientific subjects as hydrodynamics and astronomy. Through Jan. 1. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—The museum's extensive Chinese collection has handsome new quarters in which a careful, lucid presentation offers a broad look at the art of the Middle Kingdom, from Neolithic stone carvings to blue-and-white ceramics of the late Ch'ing dynasty. . . . ¶ "In the Light of Italy: Corot and Early Open-Air Painting," an exquisite exhibition of oil sketches which makes a marvellous pendant to the big Corot show at the Met. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ A small show of black-and-white photographs by Bruce Cratsley. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

American Craft Museum, 40 W. 53rd St. (956-3535)—A mid-career survey of glazed ceramic, bronze, and mixed-medium works by Michael Lucero. Through Feb. 16. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

The Jewish Museum, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—"From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power, 1600-1800." Through Jan. 19. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—The heart of the Morgan collection is its stock of Rembrandts, the greatest of which are now on view in "A Fine Line: Rembrandt as Etcher." Every impression here is exquisite, from the splendid copy of "The Hundred Guilder Print" to a postage-stamp-size self-portrait as a goggle-eyed, openmouthed youth. In the series illustrating scenes from the life of Jesus, the gorgeously printed "Adoration of the Shepherds: A Night Piece" is especially fine, its figures just visible in a rich, velvety midnight gloom. . . . ¶ "Seventeenth-Century Dutch Drawings," a selection of seventy-five Baroque works which includes, among other odds and ends, a strange pair of copies of Mogul miniatures by Rembrandt and some brilliantly colored genre scenes by Adriaen van Ostade. Both shows through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum for African Art, 593 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. (966-1313)—"Art of the Baga" features drums, masks, costumes, and other objects made by the Baga inhabitants of Guinea, in West Africa. Through Jan. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5:30; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St. (595-9533)—"A Place for Us: Vernacular Architecture in American Folk Art" features paintings, sculptures, furniture, needlework, and decorative arts from the past three centuries. Through Jan. 12. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (369-4880)—"Powerful Expressions: Recent American Drawings" includes five works each by fifteen artists, among them Jim Dine, Sidney Goodman, R. B. Kitaj, Susan Rothenberg, Jasper Johns, and Elizabeth Murray. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

National Museum of the American Indian, 1 Bowling Green (668-6624)—"Woven by the Grandmothers," a display of nineteenth-century Navajo textiles from the museum's collection. Through Jan. 8. . . . ¶ Thirty-eight contemporary Navajo rugs and tapestries are on view, from the collection of the Denver Art Museum. Through Jan. 8. (Open daily, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

The New Museum, 583 Broadway, between Houston and Prince Sts. (219-1222)—"Up To and Including Her Limits." Carolee Schneemann, an important precursor of the body-art movement, is the focus of this small but well-mounted retrospective, which ranges from early, funky assemblages incorporating broken mirrors and dead birds to photomontages and videos that document such major performance pieces as the infamous "Meat Joy." Performed in 1964, "Meat Joy" had a cast of nine men and women who stripped down and writhed ecstatically as they pelted one another with mackerels, plucked chickens, and hot dogs, and rubbed them against their naked bodies as they painted themselves. Through Jan. 26. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 6; Saturday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 6.)

New York Academy of Sciences, 2 E. 63rd St. (838-0230)—"Strange Matter" revisits the inks and watercolors of Roz Chast. Through Jan. 10. (Open weekdays, 10 to 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. (873-3400)—"Scaasi: The Joy of Dressing Up," a large retrospective studded with examples of the designer's entrance-making couture. Through Jan. 5. . . . ¶ A small display of paintings, letters, and sketches by the engineer and inventor Robert Fulton explores the parallels between his career and that of Leonardo. Through Jan. 5. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"A History of Women Photographers" presents two hundred and eighteen artists who put out work between 1850 and 1975. Well-knowns (Cameron, Abbott, Lange, Model, Levitt, Arbus) mingle with near-unknowns (Sarah J. Eddy, Miss Eagle, Kate Smith) in slightly cramped quarters, but you'll find enough to linger over happily. Through Jan. 4. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Jörg Immendorff—Grotesque drawings and a painting (all strongly reminiscent of the savage satires of another German, Georg Grosz) based on the artist's designs for a production of Stravinsky's opera "The Rake's Progress" at Salzburg in 1994. In a series of gouaches, Immendorff identifies himself with the opera's protagonist, Tom Rakewell; "In the House of Mother Goose," for example, shows him, in hideous whiteface, contemplating himself in a hand mirror that reflects the sly face of an ape. One wall is given over to a twenty-three-foot canvas of the stage as a battlefield, with the players revealed, often lewdly, from behind. Through Jan. 18. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. 988-1623. Open Mondays.)

Short List—**richard baker,** Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780. Through Jan. 11. . . . **david bierk,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. 399-5510. Through Jan. 11. . . . **elizabeth bishop** and **robert bordo,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Both shows through Jan. 4. . . . **jean-baptiste-camille corot,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606. Open Mondays; through Jan. 13. . . . **jim dine,** Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 421-3292. Through Jan. 11. . . . **suzan frecon,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 21 E. 70th St., 535-8810; and Markey, 55 Vandam St., 627-4446. Both shows through Jan. 11. . . . **andy goldsworthy,** Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 4. . . . **reginald marsh,** DC Moore, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 247-2111. Through Jan. 4. . . . **horace pippin,** Dintenfass, 20 E. 79th St. 581-2268. Through Jan. 9. . . . **paula rego,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through Jan. 4. . . . **philip sherrod,** Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 988-6870. Through Jan. 31. . . . **gretchen dow simpson,** Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669. Through Jan. 4. . . . **leon polk smith,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. 319-1996. Open Mondays; through Jan. 25. . . . **zao wou-ki,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. 755-7288. Through Jan. 18.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Ellen Cantor—Wall drawings, collages, and a video. Cantor's work dwells on sexuality—particularly sexual violence—within a quasi-mythic dream world (Bambi plays a conspicuous role). The video is especially successful in its juxtaposition of images from "The Sound of Music" and "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre": Julie Andrews pirouettes amid Alpine scenery, then the chainsaw-wielding maniac enacts the same movement. The voice-over, in contrast, is by a woman who drily recounts the events of an abusive relationship. Through Jan. 12. (XL, 504 W. 22nd St. 462-4111.)

Ulf Rollof—"27 March 1994 (Fountain)," a rather bizarre sculpture/contraption. The Swedish artist has suspended the trunk of a fir tree above a trough, where it is doused by a continuous stream of soapy water; the murky runoff collects below. You might say it's a pure art work, animated by an engaging purposelessness. Through Jan. 12. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

Sue Williams—New paintings, predominantly large-scale, by a young artist who first won renown for her riffs (often savagely funny) on the war of the sexes. They continue in the direction of her Twomblyesque previous endeavors, but they're much more successful. Williams's former vitriol has given way to an intricate, all-over play of shapes; sex and its grotesqueries remain the iconographic core, but the imagery blends seamlessly with abstract patterns. The male master of choice now seems to be de Kooning—she particularly favors the looping line of his final manner—though her appropriation of such a canonical macho artist obviously has its ironies. Through Jan. 31. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

William Wood—Abstract grisailles whose repetitive, vaguely organic forms suggest images in an electron microscope. They're quite beautiful, and, like the paintings of David Reed and Gerhard Richter, they remain somewhat mysterious in the way they achieve their formal effects. Through Jan. 25. (Kirkland, 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Opens Sundays at noon.)

"Flying Saucer Project"—Ceramics, furniture, paintings, and sculptures by Mary Heilmann, Steve Keister, and Steven Baines. Heilmann, who is now best known for her woozily sensuous abstract paintings, started out as a ceramist; a year ago she began working with Keister and Baines, and this is the fruit of their labors. Although the mix of fine-art and practical objects is initially perplexing, the show repays sustained attention. Through Jan. 12. (Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366.)

Short List—**stephen di cillo** and **julie langsam,** Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 243-5937. Through Jan. 26 . . . **kk kozik,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through Jan. 12. . . . **helmut middendorf,** Nosei, 530 W. 22nd St. 741-8695. Through Jan. 10. . . . **jeff nelson,** Greene Naftali, 526 W. 26th St. 463-7770. Opens at noon; through Feb. 2. . . . **robert overby,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Jan. 12.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Deborah Butterfield—Horses, fashioned from scrap metal, rusted pipe, and bronze casts of driftwood, brambles, thorny sticks—it looks as if the sculptor can make any old piece of junk describe a horse. Her descriptions vary according to the material: in one work, a hunk of driftwood captures the saddle-smooth curve of spine; in another, a steel tread from an industrial stairway serves as a muscular haunch. The looseness of such associations gives the work a freehand quality, as if, in her travels, Butterfield had picked up lines from Degas drawings instead of branches and bent metal slats. Through Jan. 18. (Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880.)

Nicole Eisenman—A freewheeling, virtuosic display of works in every medium, from outrageous cartoons (cowgirls defecating over the

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corral fence, Jesus sodomizing himself) to large-scale, obsessively inventive installations. Much of the artist's work is clumsy, and her humor is frequently on the whoopee-cushion level, but all the same a powerful, goofy allure pervades the show. Through Jan. 11. (Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775.)

ONLY CONNECT

Spumco's Wonderful World of Cartoons (http://www.spumco.com/)—In the ever-expanding menagerie of dysfunctional cartoon characters, there will always be a fresh box of kitty litter for Ren and Stimpy, the brooding Chihuahua and the slobbering cat who, until recently, starred in their own program on Nickelodeon. With a style that was spare yet psychedelic (as if Stephen Bosustow's Gerald McBoing Boing family of the early fifties had been dosed with *Zap Comix* acid), "The Ren & Stimpy Show" spawned a campus craze that burned itself out through overexposure; Nickelodeon cancelled the show last year, having ridden its pets into the ground.

As the cognoscenti know, the show was originally produced by its creator, John Kricfalusi, and Spumco, his Hollywood-based cartoon studio, but after seventeen episodes the network took control, citing (à la Charlie the Tuna) standards of good taste. The Spumco Web site is, in part, the studio's revenge. "By means of the Internet," the cartoonists declare on their Fun & Thrills page, "we are now able to beam our dirty pictures and shocking cartoons directly onto your computer screen! No one is telling us: 'Kill the Magic Boogers' or 'We revoke our approval of the underwear sniffing gag.' We are now free to do *whatever we want*."

O.K., so it's no "free Serbia" home page, but the spirit of Spumco ("The Danes Call It Quality") is refreshing. Featured are selections from the studio's first comic books ("You'll find dog butts, cute girls, fish moles and lots of manly outdoor adventures in these fun packed pages") and a place to buy "dolls for boys" (Jimmy the Squeezable Idiot; George Liquor, American; and the brilliant, malleable Three Stooges Dolls—"History's Most Perfect Men"). Spumco's attempts at self-marketing are desperate and laughable, in a *Mad* magazine sort of way ("If you love us, for God's sake . . . Buy something!"), but aside from being something to behold (the comic pages fill your screen), the site passes the sincerity test. In a college-newspaper interview, included at the site, Kricfalusi points to influences as diverse as the forties Warner Bros. cartoonist Bob Clampett, Joan Crawford, and Elvis, and he expresses his regret at never having introduced a line of Stimpy lingerie.

Ed Lipski—Stark and scary sculptures a child might dream up: a black fake-leather balloon, a beakless giant black bird, an aggressively ill-tempered banner (". . . I saw a bird and it was bad and I went to the sea and it was bad . . ."). Lipski creates an air of infantile menace which is, literally, hard to shake: at the door, a boy-size manikin—nicely dressed but with a black smiley face pasted where his features should be—extends his hand in greeting. Through Jan. 31. (In Khan, 415 West Broadway. 226-6484.)

Charlie Milgrim—The bowling ball is the star of Milgrim's sculpture; the artist has conjured a broad palette of solid-color, swirly, and pearlized specimens into poses of surprising litheness. In "Secret Concert," twin purple ones on music stands lean together and chastely kiss; in "Mood Rack," seven, in moody blue-green shades, rest on an eight-foot ladder, one to a step, like putti. Elsewhere, the balls balance on scavenged implements: a leaf grinder, a pitchfork, a steel half-barrel of inscrutable farmyard use. The effect is delicate and giddy—and always dangerous, like a good joke. Through Jan. 4. (O.K. Harris, 383 West Broadway. 431-3600.)

Yasumasa Morimura—The subject matter for this exhibit by the highly accomplished Japanese conceptual artist is the whole history of the movies—or at least the female half of it. In a series of lavishly printed, oversized photographic prints, he re-creates some of the screen's most famous moments, casting himself in the starring roles: as Scarlett O'Hara, as Holly Golightly, as Cleopatra. Through Jan. 4. (Luhring Augustine, 130 Prince St. 219-9600.)

"Miniature Obsessions"—Works by outsider artists on an ambitiously small scale: furniture carved from soap, totems carved and painted on toothpicks, group portraits and street scenes embroidered from unravelled socks. Through Jan. 11. (American Primitive, 594 Broadway. 966-1530.)

Short List—**charles arnoldi** and **kenny scharf**, Cowles, 420 West Broadway. 925-3500. Through Jan. 25. . . . **richard cleaver**, Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. 431-4224. Through Jan. 4. . . . **robert colescott**, Kind, 136 Greene St. 925-1200. Through Jan. 4. . . . **stan douglas**, Zwirner, 43 Greene St. 966-9074. Through Jan. 25. . . . **shawn dulaney**, Bridges and Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Through Jan. 19. . . . **karen frances fitch**, Prince Street Gallery, 121 Wooster St. 226-9402. Opens at noon; through Jan. 14. . . . **leslie lerner**, Rosenberg and Kaufman, 115 Wooster St. 431-4838. Through Jan. 4. . . . **pierre le tan**, Kasmin, 74 Grand St. 219-3219. Through Jan. 18. . . . **joseph marioni**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Jan. 11. . . . **justin novak**, Synchronicity Space, 55 Mercer St. 925-8645. Through Jan. 4. . . . **charles searles**, June Kelly, 591 Broadway. 226-1660. Through Jan. 7.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Ansel Adams (1902-84) / **"A Season of Victory"**—Vintage prints (smaller, generally, than the artist's later ones), including views of Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, and Alaska. / The Yankees on the road to this year's Big Show, by Barton Silverman, David Burnett, Linda Cataffo, and photographers from the Associated Press and *Sports Illustrated*. Both shows through Jan. 11. (Danziger, 130 Prince St. 226-0056.)

Darrel Ellis (1958-92)—Perhaps best known as a favorite model of Robert Mapplethorpe's, Ellis deserves, on the evidence of this show, wider recognition as an artist in his own right. The pictures are all derived from photographs, but his careful reworking of them—in paint and other mediums—endows them with a melancholy expressionism. One immediately recognizable image is his pen-and-ink self-portrait, after a well-known Mapplethorpe photograph: a beautiful reappropriation of his own image. Through Jan. 25. (Art in General, 79 Walker St. 219-0473. Opens at noon.)

Lynn Geesaman / **Eugène Atget** (1857-1927)—An unreconstructed seeker of beauty in the landscape who is finding more ready acceptance in our post-everything climate, Geesaman here captures the Parc de Sceaux, one of Atget's most sublime haunts, in her own consummate style. In one of several views, a sharp alabaster sky separates two sentry rows of trees, their branches glowing like bones in an X-ray, their leaves like feathers. Other sites in France and Belgium provide her with similar successes, but none approach the ripe kitsch of the iron-filigree cupola of the Love Temple, at Longwood Gardens, in Pennsylvania. / Seven vintage albumen prints of gardens (Versailles, Saint-Cloud, Sceaux) and street scenes. Don't miss them. Both shows through Jan. 11. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

Fawn Potash—"The Library Series." An obsession with books is one of the saner fetishes. As a way of escaping the daily grind, Potash started working late at night, piling up worn nineteenth-century volumes from her shelves in various arrangements and shooting them by lamplight and moonlight. Some of the pictures are more engaging than others—a "flying" pile, a modest profile of a mammoth Webster's, and three schoolbooks with their pages interleaved as if they'd been shuffled. Portraits of books can be, well, bookish, but these gentle wax-rubbed prints shine with a sensuousness that goes beyond prim propriety. (Several of the books, with titles like "Insect Folk," "Bird World," and "Ways of the Six Footed," are on view.) Through Jan. 18. (Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

"All You See!"—Sarah Morthland, the founder and former director of Gallery 292, has opened a new space in Chelsea, in an 1860 town house that at one time sheltered a speakeasy. The eclectic lot here (the title is from an optometrist's trade sign) includes antique and recent abstract photographs, photograms, X-rays, and other oddments. Through Jan. 12. (225 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. 242-7767. Opens at noon.)

"Women of the Clarence White School"—In the beginning (ca. 1914), female students outnumbered males two to one. On view here are works by Doris Ulmann, Anne W. Brigman, Margaret Watkins, Margaret Bourke-White, Dorothea Lange, and others. Through Jan. 18. (Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010.)

International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (860-1777)—"Pictorialism into Modernism: The Clarence H. White School of Photography." In 1914, White, a founding member of the Photo-Secession movement, established the first school in New York dedicated to photography. Its shaping influence can be seen here in works by such teachers and pupils as Doris Ulmann, Margaret Watkins, Laura Gilpin, Karl Struss, Margaret Bourke-White, and Paul Outerbridge, Jr. Through Jan. 12. . . . ¶ "Labyrinth: Images of Hong Kong," a selection of black-and-white photographs by Masahiko Yamashita. Through Jan. 12. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—"Roadworks," a large selection of black-and-white prints by Linda McCartney. Through Feb. 9. . . . ¶ "All Zones Off Peak: Photographs of Liverpool by Tom Wood." Through Feb. 9. . . . ¶ "A Celebration of 25 Years of Light Gallery." Through Feb. 9. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**juan carlos alom**, Throckmorton, 153 E. 61st St. 223-1059. Through Feb. 1. . . . **lynn davis**, Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Through Jan. 4. . . . **jill freedman**, Witkin, 415 West Broadway. 925-5510. Through Jan. 11. . . . **jean kallina**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Jan. 19. . . . **jill krementz**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through Jan. 4. . . . **lisette model** and **diane arbus**, Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Both shows through Jan. 11. . . . **jeanne moutoussamy-ashe**, Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through Jan. 22. . . . **john schabel**, Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753. Through Jan. 12. . . . **margaret watkins**, Mann, 42 E. 76th St. 570-1223. Through Jan. 4.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, and the New York Public Library.)

Górecki, Symphony No. 3 ◆ Upshaw, Zinman. (Nonesuch) 00110

Brahms, Symphony No. 3; Alto Rhapsody ◆ Von Otter. Vienna Phil./Levine. (DG) 00269 C

Beethoven, Symphony No. 1; Symphony No. 3 "Eroica" ◆ Concertgebouw Orch./Sawallisch. (EMI Classics) 00912

Vivaldi, 6 Flute Concertos, Op. 10 ◆ Patrick Gallois, Orpheus CO. (DG) 03213

Evgeny Kissin: Chopin At Carnegie Hall II ◆ (RCA Victor Red Seal) 03221

Schumann, Piano Concerto; Prokofiev, Piano Concerto No. 3 ◆ Van Cliburn, piano. (RCA Living Stereo) 03246

Mahler, Symphony No. 6 ◆ Vienna Phil./Pierre Boulez. (DG) 03409

Bach, Organ Blaster! ◆ Michael Murray in organ favorites. (Telarc) 03599

Evgeny Kissin: The Legendary 1984 Moscow Concert ◆ Chopin, Piano Concertos Nos. 1 & 2. (BMG Classics) 03793

Holst, The Planets ◆ Philharmonia Orch./John Eliot Gardiner. (DG) 03835

Beethoven, Symphony No. 9 "Choral" ◆ Chicago SO/Solti. (London) 03847 C

Grofé, Grand Canyon & Mississippi Suites ◆ Howard Hanson conducts. (Mercury Living Presence) 03885

Franck, Sym. In D Minor; Roussel, Sym. No. 3 ◆ Orch. Nationale de France/Bernstein. (DG) 03889

Shostakovich, Piano Concerto No. 1; Haydn, Piano Concerto No. 11 ◆ Martha Argerich, piano. (DG) 04102

Philip Glass: Glass, Two Pages; Music In Fifths ◆ (Elektra/Nonesuch) 04846

Ravel, Beautiful Starry Night ◆ Jean-Yves Thibaudet. (London) 05061

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Vladimir Horowitz: The Private Collection Vol. 1 ◆ Unreleased live recordings 1945-50. (RCA Victor Red Seal) 06189 C

Mussorgsky, Pictures At An Exhibition ◆ Byron Janis, piano. (Mercury Living Presence) 06727

Vivaldi, Mandolin, Violin & Flute Concertos ◆ London Musici (Conifer) 06961

Schoenberg, Verklärte Nacht; Piano Pieces Op. 11 & 19 ◆ Chicago SO/Barenboim. (Teldec) 07257

Mozart, Eine Kleine Nachtmusik ◆ Cleveland Orch./Dohnányi. (London) 08228 C

Katia & Marielle Labèque: España! ◆ Music by Falla, Albeniz & others. (Philips) 08360

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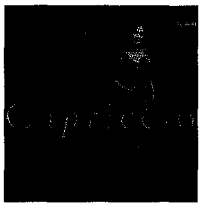

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**TOSCA,** with Maria Guleghina, Sergej Larin, and James Morris; conducted by Christian Badea. (Jan. 1 at 8 and Jan. 4 at 1:30.) . . . **HANSEL AND GRETEL,** performed in English, with Dawn Upshaw, Jennifer Larmore, and Marilyn Zschau; Andrew Davis. (Jan. 2 at 7 and Jan. 4 at 8.) . . . With Clare Gormley, Jane Bunnell, and Joyce Castle; Mr. Davis. (Jan. 7 at 7.) . . . **LA BOHÈME,** with Patricia Racette, Gwynne Geyer, Marcello Giordani, and Anthony Michaels-Moore; Nello Santi. (Jan. 3 at 8.) . . . **CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA** and **PAGLIACCI,** with Dolora Zajick, Fabio Armiliato, and Bruno Pola in the former, and Diana Soviero, Johan Botha, and Paolo Gavanelli in the latter; Simone Young conducts both. (Jan. 6 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 3-4 at 8 and Jan. 7 at 7:30: Zubin Mehta conducts Bartók's Violin Concerto No. 2 (featuring Midori) and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. . . . ¶ Jan. 4 at 2: A Casual Saturdays concert that comprises Prokofiev's Quintet for Oboe, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, and Double-Bass (Op. 39) and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, with Mr. Mehta conducting the latter. (875-5030.)

New York Pops—Philippe Entremont leads a New Year's Day program of light music from Vienna, including operatic selections by Mozart (with soprano Lotte Leitner and tenor Peter Jelosits) and dances by Johann Strauss, Jr., Josef Strauss, and Lehár. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Jan. 1 at 2:30.)

RECITALS

Bargemusic—Violinist Mark Peskanov and soprano DeBorge Pinnington perform their joint composition "Circle," and pianist Rita Sloan joins Mr. Peskanov in Prokofiev's Violin Sonata No. 1. Schubert's String Trio in B-Flat Major and Schumann's Piano Quartet complete the program. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. Jan. 2 at 7:30 and Jan. 5 at 4.)

Emma Tahmizian—In this hour-long recital, the pianist presents new short works by Robert Gates, Heather Schmidt, and Dalit Warshaw, all of whom will be on hand to offer comments on their music. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 4 at 9.)

Mindy Kaufman—The New York Philharmonic's piccoloist performs a program that includes flute sonatas by Telemann (in F-Minor) and Bach (in E-Flat Major). Cellist Iris Regev and harpsichordist Ilan Rechtman assist. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Jan. 5 at noon.)

Leon Bates and the Bronx Arts Ensemble—The pianist performs Mendelssohn's Rondo Capriccioso in one of the Ensemble's Chamber Music in Great Homes concerts. Also on the program are Beethoven's Quintet for Piano and Winds, Poulenc's Sextet, and Raymond Torres-Santos's Divertimento for Winds. (5247 Independence Ave., the Bronx. Jan. 5 at 2. For information about tickets, call 718-601-7399.)

North/South Consonance—Pianist and conductor Max Lifchitz spearheads a concert that comprises Virgil Thomson's Sonata da Chiesa, Sessions's Duo for Violin and Piano, Raymond Torres-Santos's "Salsa y Sonecos," Juan Hassler's "Epitafio," Jonathan Kramer's "Another Sunrise," and Herbert Bielawa's "Fluxband." (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Jan. 5 at 3. No tickets necessary.)

Evangeline Benedetti—The cellist, a member of the New York Philharmonic since 1967, performs the première of Tania León's Four Pieces for Violoncello, in a program that also includes Bach's Unaccompanied Suite No. 4, Beethoven's C-Major Sonata (Op. 102, No. 1), and Prokofiev's Sonata (Op. 119). Pianist Harriet Wingreen (her colleague in the Philharmonic) assists. (West End Collegiate Church, West End Ave. at 77th St. Jan. 5 at 3:30. No tickets necessary.)

Music Before 1800 Productions—The ten-voice chamber ensemble (which doubles as the Choir of Corpus Christi Church) performs motets written for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany by Lasso and Sweelinck; Teares of the Muses, a dolefully named viol consort, intersperses selections by Michael Praetorius, Willaert, Gibbons, and Thomas Lupo. Louise Basbas directs. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. Jan. 5 at 4. 666-9266.)

Salon Soirées—Clarinet trios by Brahms and Glinka, performed by clarinettist JoAnn Sternberg, cellist George Davis, and pianist Ilan Rechtman. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 5 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

At the Mansfield—Flutist Nadine Hur, violinist Pauline Kim, and cellist Iris Regev play trios by Haydn and Danzi. (Mansfield Hotel, 12 W. 44th St. Jan. 6 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

"Hansel and Gretel," at the Metropolitan Opera.

ROXANA BIKADOROFF

"The Intimate Brahms"—The Brahms Year begins, with tributes centering on April 3, the hundredth anniversary of his death. For chamber musicians, of course, every year is a Brahms year. Chamber works occupied him throughout his long career: he wrote seventeen of them, for nearly all the principal small-ensemble formulations—piano trio, horn trio, clarinet trio, string quartet, piano quartet, string quintet, clarinet quintet, piano quintet, and string sextet—which today stand as cornerstones of the repertoire. This week, the Bachmann-Klibonoff-Fridman Trio embarks on a three-concert series presenting all the Brahms chamber works that involve piano. The opening installment comprises the Piano Trio No. 1 (in B Major, Op. 8, in the composer's revision of 1890), the A-Minor Clarinet Trio (Op. 114), and the A-Major Piano Quartet (Op. 26), with clarinettist Alan R. Kay and violist Eufrosina Raileanu assisting. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. Jan. 7 and Jan. 11 at 7. For information about tickets, call 333-5200.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Choose Your Marathon—Jan. 1, beginning at noon: On its first anniversary last year, the now annual New Year's Day reading at Café Nico, a loft where the chanteuse once lived, featured some hundred and thirty performers declaiming original work; each one spent three minutes onstage, and many of them left their texts behind for the organizers to collect in an "automatic magazine." This year, with a hundred and ninety-five poets, performance artists, musicians, and dancers scheduled to appear, the organizers have decided to gather three lines of poetry from each guest into an "automatic epic," to be called "El Niño"—which is also the name of this year's twelve-hour event. Since it's designed "for emerging people, not the established writers"—as one of the organizers describes it—the reading will begin with a handful of New York City teen-agers, but there promises to be no shortage of recognizable names, among them Amanda Vogel, Heather Woodbury, and Sparrow. (101 Avenue A, between 6th and 7th Sts., 2nd floor. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ Jan. 1, beginning at 2: For the twenty-third year, the Poetry Project presents its annual New Year's Day reading, and its roster of a hundred and forty spoken-word artists, poets, musicians, and dancers includes such notables as Penny Arcade, Jim Carroll, Ron Padgett, and Richard Hell. Bob Holman, a Poetry Project artist who will also take the stage at Café Nico, sums up the two readings thus: "It's the difference between a church and a café. At St. Mark's it's 'Will they show up?'; at Café Nico it's 'Who will show up?' " (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

Metro Velodrome—Cyclists looking for a way to honor their New Year's resolution to bike more can begin by following Zoe Waldron through the Lower East Side on Jan. 2 (starting at 6:30 P.M. from the Cube on Astor Place). Since October, Waldron, an editor and a transportation activist, has been organizing monthly outings modelled on mass rides in San Francisco and Berkeley which attract hundreds of bikers. Thus far, Waldron's have lured between two and five dozen participants. While the cold might discourage some, there are those who will be there snow or shine: "When we had that big snowfall last January," one veteran rider bragged, "the only way I could get to my office was by taking out my mountain bike." (For more information, call 802-8222.)

Avast Ye Winter Blues!—The eighty-seventh New York National Boat Show brings more than a thousand pleasure craft (cabin cruisers, fishing skiffs, runabouts, and plenty more) to town—not to mention an excuse to slip on your Docksides in January without springing for airfare. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Jan. 4, from 10 to 9, Jan. 5, from 11 to 6, and Jan. 6-7, from 1 to 9. Through Jan. 12. For more information, call 984-7070.)

Reading—Jan. 7 at 8: Tyler Stovall, a professor of history at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a former resident of Paris, reads from "Paris Noir," his book about African-Americans in the City of Light. (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 82nd St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Jan. 5 at 10 A.M.: Children (and adults) can learn where snow, sleet, hail, and hurricanes come from in a workshop led by Helen Conover, a documentary filmmaker, and Stephen Shea, a former elementary-school science teacher. Aspiring forecasters will also have the chance to make their own meteorological instruments to use at home. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 6:30: Joan Hartman-Goldsmith, the director and founder of the Institute for Asian Studies, shows slides of places she's grown fond of during thirteen visits to China. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Tickets at the door.)

Walks—Jan. 1: Adventure on a Shoestring greets the New Year with a trio of tours: Gramercy Park, at 10; Greenwich Village, at noon and 2; and Chelsea, at 4. For more information, call 265-2663.

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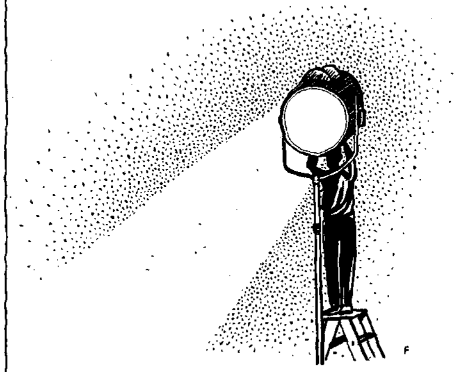
THE MOVIES



CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 20.)

Beavis & Butt-head Do America—The full-length adventures of MTV's animated delinquents. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, State, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Big Night—The actor Stanley Tucci co-wrote (with Joseph Tropiano), co-directed (with Campbell Scott), and co-stars (with Tony Shalhoub) in this elegant, leisurely low-budget comedy about a struggling Italian restaurant run by a pair of immigrant brothers. The unusually happy, relaxed ensemble includes Ian Holm, Isabella Rossellini, Minnie Driver, Allison Janney, and Campbell Scott. The big set piece—a lavish dinner in honor of the singer-bandleader Louis Prima—is a fitting climax to the movie's patient accumulation of savory and blissfully pointless delights: a convincing illustration of how keen pleasure for pleasure's sake can be.—T.R. (9/23/96) (Cinema 3 and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Breaking the Waves—The Danish director Lars von Trier tells the sad story of a devout young Scottish woman (Emily Watson) who becomes a whore in order to save the life of her critically ill husband (Stellan Skarsgård). Von Trier gives the highbrow audience precisely what it wanted in the art-house boom years of the fifties and early sixties—nudity plus theology. The erotic-metaphysical hokum would be somewhat easier to take if the picture displayed anything resembling a genuine religious impulse.—T.R. (11/18/96) (Angelika Film Center.)

La Cérémonie—A psychological thriller written and directed by Claude Chabrol, about an upper-class couple (Jacqueline Bissett and Jean-Pierre Cassel), their housekeeper (Sandrine Bonnaire), and their nemesis, the local postmistress (Isabelle Huppert). In French. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Citizen Ruth—Laura Dern gives a daringly repulsive performance as Ruth Stoops, a trashy drug addict who gets pregnant and becomes a pawn of both pro-life Christian zealots and kooky feminists. Alexander Payne's début comedy has a fresh, fast-paced cynicism reminiscent of Preston Sturges, but the un-Sturges-like topicality tends to weigh it down. Still, Dern is brilliant as the unrepentant glue sniffer, and so is Mary Kay Place as the creepy Christian mom who tries to reform her. With Burt Reynolds as the pedophiliac head of a pro-life ministry, and Tippi Hedren as a jet-setting Gloria Steinem type. Written by Payne and Jim Taylor.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Eastside Playhouse.)

The Crucible—Nicholas Hytner's florid, hyperbolic film of Arthur Miller's 1953 drama, about the Salem witchcraft trials, reveals the play as a characteristic product of its time—not so much in its anti-McCarthyism as in its sexual politics. The themes that come through most clearly here are fear of women and hatred of youth: the teen-age girls of Salem squeal and writhe, and the hero, John Proctor (Daniel Day-Lewis)—the manliest man in the colonies—swings from the gallows. Also with Winona Ryder, Paul Scofield, Joan Allen, and Bruce Davison.—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Daylight—What makes this disaster flick any different from the rest? For one thing, it involves an explosion in a tunnel between Manhattan and New Jersey—a setting that supplies an especially high number of ways for people to die: flood, fire, suffocation, electrocution, falling chunks of concrete. For another, it stars Sylvester Stallone as a former director of New York City Emergency Medical Services who still hasn't recovered from a death he caused years earlier in his zeal for rescuing. He's obsessed, which is lucky for the trapped survivors, because they're clumsy, hysterical, and mean. (They leave him to die, but he's resurrected.) The special effects pale before the star's vanity. Amy Brenneman, Viggo Mortensen, and Claire Bloom are among the large cast of people who let him down.—S.K. (Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and 34th Street Showplace.)

The English Patient—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katherine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

The Evening Star—Fifteen years after the death of her daughter, Aurora Greenway (Shirley MacLaine) deals with her rebellious grandchildren, in writer-director Robert Harling's sequel to "Terms of Endearment," based on Larry McMurtry's novel. (East 85th Street, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, State, and Waverly.)

Evita—Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's musical biography of Eva Perón, adapted and directed by Alan Parker and starring Madonna, Jonathan Pryce, and Antonio Banderas. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Lincoln Square.)

Ghosts of Mississippi—Alec Baldwin plays Bobby DeLaughter, the prosecutor who finally convicted Bryon De La Beckwith (James Woods) for the murder of the civil-rights activist Medgar Evers. With Whoopi Goldberg. Directed by Rob Reiner. (19th Street East 6, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

Hamlet—Kenneth Branagh directs and stars in this four-hour version of the tragedy. With Derek Jacobi, Julie Christie, Richard Briers, and Kate Winslet. (Paris.)

101 Dalmatians—The remake from hell. In the new live-action version, directed by Stephen Herek, the dogs no longer talk but merely cock their heads and bark; and the humans, led by Jeff Daniels and Joely Richardson, go through the whole affair with a sort of dazed, disbelieving look, as well they might. In her initial scenes as Cruella DeVil, Glenn Close displays a certain scarlet relish for her own monstrosity. But by the end, the charm and delicacy of the 1961 cartoon have long been replaced by laborious gross-outs. Is this now official Disney policy?—A.L. (12/9/96) (86th Street East Twin, Gotham Cinema, Guild, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Village East Cinemas.)

I'm Not Rappaport—Herb Gardner directs his own adaptation of his 1985 play, about two old men (Walter Matthau and Ossie Davis) who meet daily on a bench in Central Park. (Regency.)

Jerry Maguire—Tom Cruise plays the title character, who is a glib, cocky agent for professional athletes. In the fluid opening scenes, the hero undergoes a yuppie dark night of the soul, reëxamines his values, and gets fired; Cruise looks uncharacteristically relaxed, and the movie, which was written and directed by Cameron Crowe, promises to be something unusual—a comedy about the spiritual crisis of a shallow man. But the star quickly reverts to his familiar mannerisms: the intense, feisty, can-do shtick that has served him so well. And Crowe loses control of the fragile comic tone. The picture winds up being merely a diffident, sweet-natured failure. Also with Renee Zellweger, Cuba Gooding, Jr., and Bonnie Hunt.—T.R. (12/16/96) (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

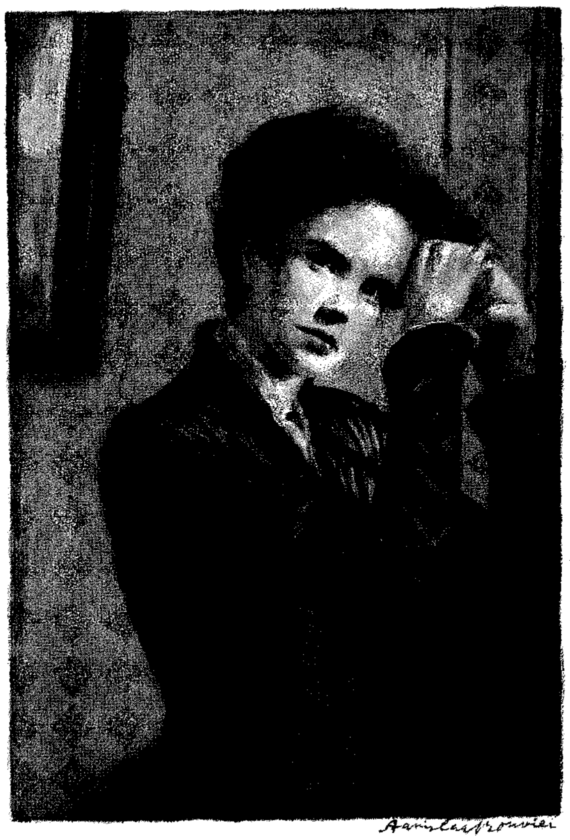
Jingle All the Way—Brian Levant's unfunny comedy aims remarkably low, and it still doesn't hit. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sinbad play frustrated fathers frantically searching for Turbo Man dolls on Christmas Eve; Randy Kornfield's script and Levant's flailing direction quickly yield to the same frenzy that envelops the parents. Why is it that Schwarzenegger's attempts at comedy are even scarier than his sci-fi thrillers?—A.L. (Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Park & 86th Street Cinemas.)

Mars Attacks!—There's a strong whiff of self-destructiveness in Tim Burton's surprisingly feeble alien-invasion comedy—of a desire to use an enormous budget and a glittering cast to as little purpose as possible. Working from a joke-deprived script by Jonathan Gems, the director seems intent on validating the primitive aesthetic of Edward D. Wood, Jr. (the famously incompetent auteur of "Plan 9 from Outer Space," and the subject of Burton's affectionate 1994 biopic, "Ed Wood"). This movie is meant to be a kind of anti-entertainment: a subversion of everything that pictures like "Independence Day" represent. For Burton, cheesiness is next to godliness; unfortunately, his willful ineptitude isn't nearly as funny as Wood's pure cluelessness. With Jack Nicholson, Glenn Close, Annette Bening, Martin Short, Michael J. Fox, Sarah Jessica Parker, Pierce Brosnan, Danny DeVito, Rod Steiger, Lisa Marie, and Tom Jones (as himself).—T.R. (12/16/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, New York Twin, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII.)

Marvin's Room—The late Scott McPherson's adaptation of his 1990 play about a pair of sisters (Meryl Streep and Diane Keaton) who reunite when one of them becomes ill. Directed by Jerry Zaks. With Leonardo DiCaprio. (Lincoln Square.)

Message to Love: The Isle of Wight Festival—Murray Lerner's documentary on the legendary 1970 rock festival captures performances by, among others, Jim Morrison, Jimi Hendrix (about two weeks before his death), Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell, and The Who—just about all of them sensational. The five-day festival has entered the histories as the end point of the peace-and-love era, and the film brilliantly documents the tensions between the promoters (who went bankrupt) and the more than six hundred thousand fans (who, for the most part, refused to pay the three-pound entrance fee—they tore down the corrugated fences). In taking a look at this poorly organized, hilariously scattered event, Lerner offers a fascinating glimpse into the fate of the rebellious and destructive rock of the sixties: it disintegrated even as it was being captured on camera in all its grubby, mud-soaked splendor.—B.D. (Film Forum.)

Michael—Holiday candy from Nora Ephron, about a cynical tabloid reporter (William Hurt) who goes to Iowa to cover a story about an angel (John Travolta); it pointlessly reheats half a dozen old screwball and sentimental plots. The one new joke—and it's a thin one—is that this angel is no halo-wearing, harp-strumming innocent: he specializes in fighting and sex. Travolta throws himself into it, but the script is so vulgar and sophomoric that it makes him look like an over-eager first-time actor. (Example: whenever the angel gets aroused, he struts around and emits a smell that is said to resemble freshly baked cookies.) Meanwhile, Hurt begins and ends the film without a personality, so that his humanization is a matter of complete indifference to the audience. Andie MacDowell is the love interest; in one of the film's many gestures of forced whimsy, she's a dog trainer masquerading as an angel expert, but she really wants to be a country-music star.—S.K. (Baronet, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)


STANISLAS BOUVIER

Nicole Kidman in "The Portrait of a Lady."

Michael Collins—The short life and lasting legend of the Irish freedom fighter Michael Collins (1890-1922), compressed into a vigorous movie by the writer and director Neil Jordan. Liam Neeson gives a hefty performance as the hero, but the film takes too much care insuring that we like and admire him, cooling the figure's hot temper and ignoring any sins of the flesh (let alone of the spirit) which he committed—he remains devoted to Kitty Kiernan (Julia Roberts). The strength of the movie resides mainly in the work of its cameraman, Chris Menges, who delivers a barrage of images as rousing and changeable as the fortunes of Collins himself. With Aidan Quinn, Stephen Rea, Alan Rickman, and Charles Dance.—A.L. (10/14/96) (Beekman.)

Microcosmos—A revelatory documentary about insects. The directors, Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennou, who were trained as biologists, spent years designing cameras that would capture spiders, butterflies, beetles, and bees in their habitats as never before. There are no voice-overs, just closeups of bugs; a few sequences surpass the most horrific science fiction, but a surprising number of the creatures are quite cute. The inventive, funny-ethereal score is by Bruno Coulais.—S.K. (Film Forum 3.)

Mother—A comedy written and directed by Albert Brooks, who also stars, as a twice-divorced writer who moves back in with his mom (Debbie Reynolds). (Chelsea West, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)

My Fellow Americans—Two former Presidents (Jack Lemmon and James Garner), long-time political enemies, join forces to clear their reputations, in a comedy directed by Peter Segal. (Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

One Fine Day—A single working mom (Michelle Pfeiffer) meets a single working dad (George Clooney), in a romantic comedy directed by Michael Hoffman. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet, Lincoln Square, National Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th St. East, and Village East Cinemas.)

The People vs. Larry Flynt—Milos Forman's film about the publisher of *Hustler* (Woody Harrelson), his wife (Courtney Love), and the First Amendment. (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Portrait of a Lady—Nicole Kidman stars as Henry James's American heiress in Europe, in a picture directed by Jane Campion. Also starring John Malkovich and Barbara Hershey. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (First & 62nd Cinemas and Lincoln Square.)

The Preacher's Wife—A remake of the 1947 Cary Grant–Loretta Young–David Niven comedy "The Bishop's Wife," with the magnetic Denzel Washington taking over for Grant as an angel trying to help a beleaguered preacher (Courtney B. Vance) and his wife (Whitney Houston), who is beginning to lose faith in their dry marriage. The first time around, the forbidden-love-triangle premise was a phony combination of titillation and prudery; this time, the emphasis is on moral uplift (Houston frequently breaks into gospel Christmas carols) and on greater loyalty within the black community, and it's equally trite. Penny Marshall directs with her usual flatness, though at least she has the sense to linger on Washington's face as he marvels at the mortals—the wit and the emotion welling in his eyes are more wholesome than all the trite talk about faith. With Gregory Hines as a greedy developer who's forgotten where his roots are.—S.K. (Chelsea West, Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 1, Embassy 2, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Showplace, and Village East Cinemas.)

Ransom—Ron Howard's grinding picture could have been a snappy little hostage thriller but decided, somewhere along the way, to take itself terribly seriously. Mel Gibson plays the wealthy owner of an airline, whose young son (Brawley Nolte) is kidnapped by a gang of good-for-nothings. Rene Russo suffers from a woefully underpowered role as the boy's mother, Gary Sinise struggles to convince us that he has the makings of a scuzzy villain, and Gibson himself has to stand there and act tragic in closeup.—A.L. (11/11/96) (84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Embassy 4, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, and Village East Cinemas.)

Ridicule—A country-bumpkin aristocrat (Charles Berling) travels to Versailles, but in order to get an audience with Louis XVI he must first learn to dance and outdo rival nobles in cruel contests of wit. Until the halfway point, Patrice Leconte's flawed but ingenious exploration of the quest for insider power depicts it as shabby, merciless, and burnout-inducing; then Remi Waterhouse's screenplay buries the comedy's strong premise under a simplistic, ahistorical gloss that makes it feel like an intellectual "Rocky." In French.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 68th St. Playhouse.)

Scream—Director Wes Craven's latest thriller, about a serial killer in a small California town. (Astor Plaza, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Waverly.)

Secrets & Lies—Hortense (Marianne Jean-Baptiste), the heroine of Mike Leigh's broadest and most ambitious film to date, decides after the death of her adoptive mother to seek her biological one. The quest turns up Cynthia (Brenda Blethyn), who freaks out: Hortense is middle-class and black, Cynthia working-class and white. Jean-Baptiste gives a quiet, pacific performance; Blethyn deals in spasms of exaggeration which belong in another film altogether. Still, there is a fine supporting cast, and they all gather in the final scene, a cathartic barbecue that starts off as nicely choreographed light comedy and darkens to a Bergman-like chorus of wailing women and slightly overcooked dialogue.—A.L. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Set It Off—Jada Pinkett, playing a protective big sister trying to pay for her brother's college education, and Queen Latifah, as a brave, blustering pothead lesbian, lead a foursome of young black women driven by poverty, police brutality, and the general callousness of men and of white people into robbing banks. Vivica A. Fox and Kimberly Elise round out the quartet, and the actresses are all strong in quirky, individual ways. This is a dumb heist movie that nevertheless gets real mileage from the plight of its tough but naïve protagonists. Directed by F. Gary Gray.—S.K. (Criterion Center, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

Shine—The hero of Scott Hicks's absorbing biographical film is the Australian concert pianist David Helfgott (played, at different stages of his life, by Alex Rafalowicz, Noah Taylor, and Geoffrey Rush), who suffered a severe breakdown, spent years in mental institutions, and then, improbably, resumed his career. Although the movie's swiftness and lightness are pleasing, the over-all image they create is indistinct: it just evaporates in your head when the lights come up.—T.R. (12/2/96) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Square.)

Some Mother's Son—A picture that traces the friendship of two Irish women (Helen Mirren and Fionnula Flanagan) whose sons have joined the 1981 I.R.A. hunger strike at Maze Prison. Directed by Terry George, who co-wrote the screenplay with Jim Sheridan. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Space Jam—Produced by Ivan Reitman and more assembled than directed by Joe Pytka, this big-budget attempt at a merchandising bonanza doesn't begin to approach the artistry of "Who Framed Roger Rabbit": the cartoon characters never seem fully integrated into the live action—they just hang there. The story, in which Michael Jordan, the basketball superstar, saves Bugs Bunny and friends from aliens who want them for their Disney-like amusement park, sacrifices the anarchic spirit of Chuck Jones, who animated the Warner Bros. classics of the forties and fifties, to the current Warners marketing team in ways so obvious that they make Disney look humble.—B.D. (Criterion Center, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)

Star Trek: First Contact—In the eighth installment of the "Star Trek" series, the deeply uninteresting crew of the Enterprise, headed by Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart), is engaged in mortal conflict with the Borg, a race of merciless world-destroyers who have travelled to Earth in the year 2063 to stop the human race from making first contact with other beings. Alice Krige plays the top Borg with a purring villainy that, for a few minutes, makes this tired movie writhe. The director, Jonathan Frakes, also stars as one of Picard's officers.—A.L. (12/9/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 34th Street Showplace, and Village Theatre VII.)

Les Voleurs—A thriller from André Téchiné, about a French policeman (Daniel Auteuil), his brother (Didier Bezace), the brother's mistress (Laurence Côte), and the mistress's lover (Catherine Deneuve). In French. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

The Whole Wide World—The relationship of Novalyne Price Ellis (Renee Zellweger) and the writer Robert E. Howard (Vincent D'Onofrio) in the nineteen-thirties is the basis for a film directed by Dan Ireland. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEAUTIFUL THING: Quad Cinema. . . . **BITTER SUGAR:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **THE GARDEN OF THE FINZI-CONTINIS:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LONE STAR** (reviewed in our issue of 7/8/96): Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **LOOKING FOR RICHARD:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **LOSING CHASE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **THE MIRROR HAS TWO FACES:** Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **THE PROPRIETOR:** Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . **SLEEPERS** (11/4/96): Village Theatre VII. . . . **SLING BLADE:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SWINGERS:** Angelika Film Center and Sutton.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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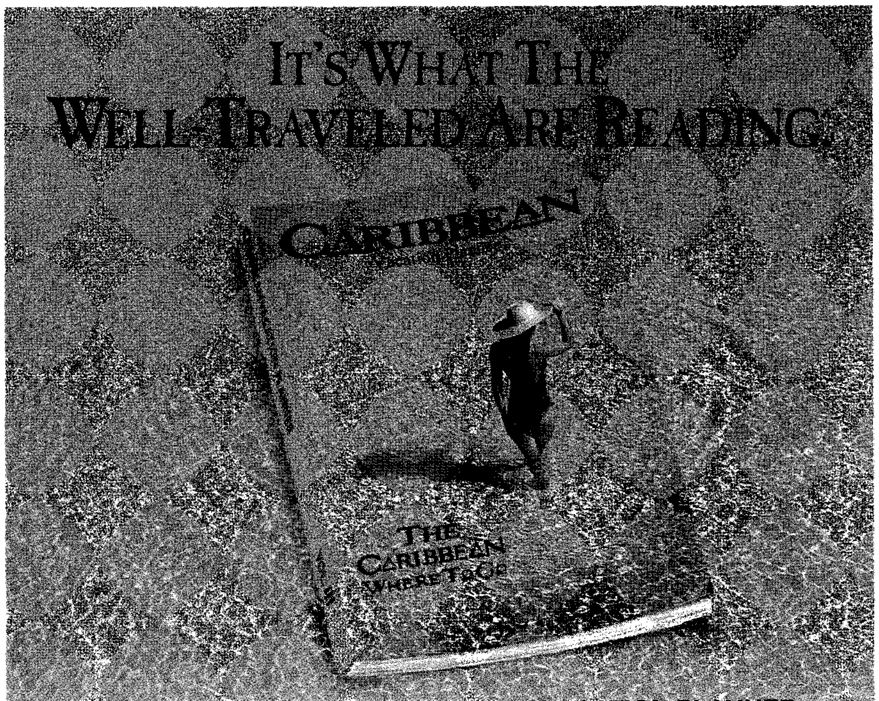
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Baronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy I, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Abigail's Party (1977)—The thwarted hopes and class abrasions beneath the glitz of new money fuel the wild black comedy of this wacked-out theater piece. In its own mood-swinging way, Mike Leigh's television transcription of his 1977 stage play takes the “Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” genre of the bitchy two-couple get-together into terrain far more lowdown and real. One couple consists of a would-be *Cosmo* gal (Alison Steadman) and an aspiring-to-culture real-estate agent (Tim Stern); the other is a footballer turned computer operator (John Slathouse) and a dim nurse (Janine Duvitski). When marital chafing rubs off any veneer of rapport left on them, the result is like a baggy-pants nouveau-riche “No Exit.” The wild card in the group is a nervous divorcée (Harriet Reynolds) concerned about her teen-age daughter's party nearby. The calamitous driving force is Steadman, who demonstrates just how much mileage a performer can get from nasal and guttural mugging and ostentatious body language.—M.S. (Anthology Film Archives; Jan. 4.)

Adam's Rib (1949)—George Cukor directed this “uncinematic” but well-played and often witty M-G-M comedy about the battle of the sexes. Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy are married lawyers on opposing sides in a court battle; the case involves equal rights for women, i.e., does Judy Holliday have the right to shoot her two-timing husband, Tom Ewell, in order to protect her home against Jean Hagen? The script, by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin, is lively and ingenious (though it stoops to easy laughs now and then). As a composer neighbor of the married lawyers, David Wayne airily upstages the two stars; Hepburn is overly intense and Tracy does some coy mugging, but Wayne stays right on target.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 4.)

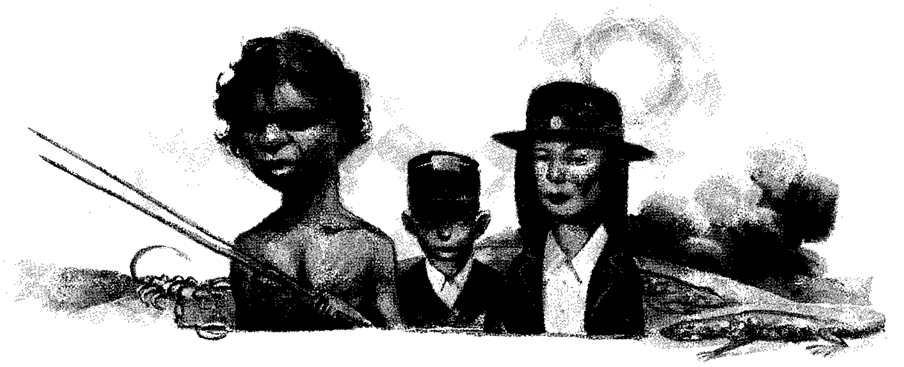
The Big Deal on Madonna Street (1958)—Mario Monicelli's gentle, casually underplayed comedy is about a group of petty thieves eager to move up in status—to rob a safe in a loan office. The thieves are ambitious, good-natured, and hopeful, but they are easily distracted; when they should be concentrating on plans, they become hungry or fall in love or quarrel or fuss over a sleepless baby. With Marcello Mastroianni (as a simpleton), Vittorio Gassman, Renato Salvatori, Claudia Cardinale, Carla Gravina, and, as the leading safecracker in Italy (now near-senile), the superb clown Totò—a stylized image of fatigue, sadness, decadence. In Italian.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 3-4.)

Grown Ups (1980)—In this hair-raisingly funny Mike Leigh comedy-drama, the surface topic is the friction between next-door neighbors on a street where the proletariat meets the lower middle class. The underlying theme is the bonds that join and strangle families and may just sustain marriages. A newly married working-class couple (Philip Davis and Lesley Manville) discover that they've moved next door to their old high-school Religious Knowledge teacher (Sam Kelly) and his wife (Lindsay Duncan); the older couple has the first private house on the block, while the young marrieds have a state-financed council house. The newlyweds' challenge is warding off the advances of the young wife's emotionally needy older sister, who tries to move in with them and even embroils the next-door neighbors in her struggle. As the sister, Brenda Blethyn gives one of the most spectacular displays of hysteria ever committed to film; she's uproarious and touching, and her crisis plays out in surprising ways, drawing the comparative strengths of the two households into sharp (and still comic) relief.—M.S. (Anthology Film Archives; Jan. 6.)

The Marrying Kind (1952)—As a couple whose marriage is breaking up, Judy Holliday (of the friendly brass lungs) and Aldo Ray (with his lightweight cracked-gravel croak) have a surprising rapport. But there's nothing to this movie, directed by George Cukor from a script by Ruth Gordon and Garson Kanin, except the expertly contrived misunderstandings of simple “little” people. It's warm; at times it's likable. But does anybody believe a minute of it? —P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 2.)

The Organizer (1963)—A nearly forgotten near-great movie, with one of Marcello Mastroianni's classic tragicomic performances. Without any taint of sentimentality, he creates moments of Chaplinesque farce and poignancy as the former academic who rides into turn-of-the-century Turin on a freight train, wearing pince-nez and rags, and proceeds to galvanize the workers at a textile mill. He's part absent-minded professor and part ramrod, a humane intellectual but also a political animal ready to steel his forces for a prolonged strike and to exploit their martyrdom. The director, Mario Monicelli, employs his knack for ensemble comedy-drama to draw you into the plight of the individual factory hands, who include the veteran character actor Folco Lulli and the vivid young Renato Salvatori. The team of Age and Scarpelli collaborated with Monicelli on the script; Giuseppe Rotunno did the masterly black-and-white cinematography, which is as evocative as old lithographs. In Italian.—M.S. (Walter Reade Theatre; Jan. 5-6.)

Walkabout (1970)—An outback survival saga, directed and photographed by Nicolas Roeg on location in Australia, which is as redolent of its period in cultural (or, rather, countercultural) history as “Easy Rider.” Its symbolic contours are blatant: even before the businessman father of a young boy and a teen-age girl drives them into the wilderness, attempts to kill them, and then commits suicide, Roeg's superbly expressive camera conveys the message that white society is life-denying and anti-nature. That theme never disappears (unfortunately), but once the siblings (Lucien John and Jenny Agutter) are on their own magic breaks out everywhere. There's a wonderful disorientation scene at a bird-ridden, berry-flecked oasis that dries up without warning or explanation; luckily, a youthful Aboriginal (David Gumpilil) appears, and, though he doesn't understand a word the siblings are saying, he allows them to join his walkabout, a rite-of-passage trek across the plains and desert which requires him to hunt and scavenge for his food. The rippling Gumpilil and the nubile, limber Agutter are splendidly sensual camera subjects: their opposing presences magnetize Roeg's dreamy, erotic montages and landscapes. The young man communicates better with the boy, who's terrific at blurting and gesticulating, but the girl touches him more deeply; therein lies the tragedy. Edward Bond wrote the screenplay, based on James Vance Marshall's novel.—M.S. (Film Forum 2.)



David Gumpilil, Lucien John, and Jenny Agutter in “Walkabout.”

TIM BOWER

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—“Walkabout” (†).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A program of films starring Judy Holliday. Jan. 2 at 2:30: “Born Yesterday” (1950, George Cukor). . . . Jan. 2 at 6: “Full of Life” (1956, Richard Quine). . . . Jan. 2 at 8: “The Marrying Kind” (†). . . . Jan. 3 at 3 and Jan. 4 at 2:30: “Winged Victory” (1944, Cukor). . . . Jan. 3 at 6: “It Should Happen to You” (1954, Cukor). . . . Jan. 3 at 8: “The Solid Gold Cadillac” (1956, Quine). . . . Jan. 4 at 5: “Adam's Rib” (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 2 at 3 and 6: “Dealer Among Dealers” (1995, Gaylen Ross). . . . ¶ Jan. 3 at 2:30: “Louisiana Story” (1948, Robert Flaherty). . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 2: “So Young, So Bad” (1950, Bernard Vorhaus). . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 5 and Jan. 6 at 2:30: “The Woman on the Beach” (1946, Jean Renoir). . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 6: “The Spiral Staircase” (1946, Robert Siodmak). . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 2:30: “Hurry Sundown” (1967, Otto Preminger). . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 6: “Jassy” (1947, Bernard Knowles).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Jan. 1 at 2 and 6:45 and Jan. 2 at 4:15 and 9: “Bells Are Ringing” (1960, Vincente Minnelli). . . . ¶ Jan. 1 at 4:15 and 9:15 and Jan. 2 at 2 and 6:45: “Gigi” (1958, Minnelli). . . . ¶ A program of Italian films by Mario Monicelli; in Italian, with English subtitles. Jan. 3 at 2 and 6:15: “Cops and Robbers” (1951). . . . Jan. 3 at 4 and 8:15 and Jan. 4 at 6:45: “The Big Deal on Madonna Street” (†). . . . Jan. 4 at 4, Jan. 5 at 8:30, and Jan. 7 at 2: “The Great War” (1959). . . . Jan. 4 at 8:45 and Jan. 5 at 4: “A Passionate Thief” (1960). . . . Jan. 5 at 6 and Jan. 6 at 2 and 6:30: “The Organizer” (†). . . . Jan. 6 at 4:15 and 9: “Brancaleone's Army” (1970). . . . ¶ Weekend showings for children. Jan. 4-5 at 2: “Sleeper” (1973, Woody Allen).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Jan. 1 at 2 and Jan. 4-5 at 2 and 4: Four programs of short animated films by Max and Dave Fleischer.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On Jan. 5 at 7, the feature will be “Written on the Wind” (1956, Douglas Sirk).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 7 at 12:30 and 7:30: “Les Misérables” (1995, Claude Lelouch; in French).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Jan. 1: “Black Orpheus” (1959, Marcel Camus; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese) and “Spirit of the Beehive” (1973, Victor Erice; in Spanish). . . . Jan. 2: “Ugetsu” (1953, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese) and “Street of Shame” (1959, Mizoguchi; in Japanese). . . . From Jan. 3: To be announced.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Jan. 2 at 6, Jan. 3 at 7, and Jan. 4 at 6:30: Three programs of films by Georges Méliès. . . . ¶ Jan. 2 at 7:30 and 9:45: “Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence” (1983, Nagisa Oshima). . . . ¶ Jan. 3 at 8:20 and 10, Jan. 4-5 at 4 and 8, Jan. 6 at 8:30, and Jan. 7 at 8: “Out of the Present” (1995, Andrei Ujica). . . . ¶ Jan. 4-5 at 2: “A Personal Journey with Martin Scorsese Through American Movies” (1995). . . . ¶ A program of films by Mike Leigh. Jan. 4 at 9:30: “Abigail's Party” (†). . . . Jan. 6 at 6:30: “Grown Ups” (†). . . . Jan. 7 at 9: “Four Days in July” (1985). . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 6: A program of films by Marie Menken. . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 7: “Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne” (1942, Robert Bresson; in French).

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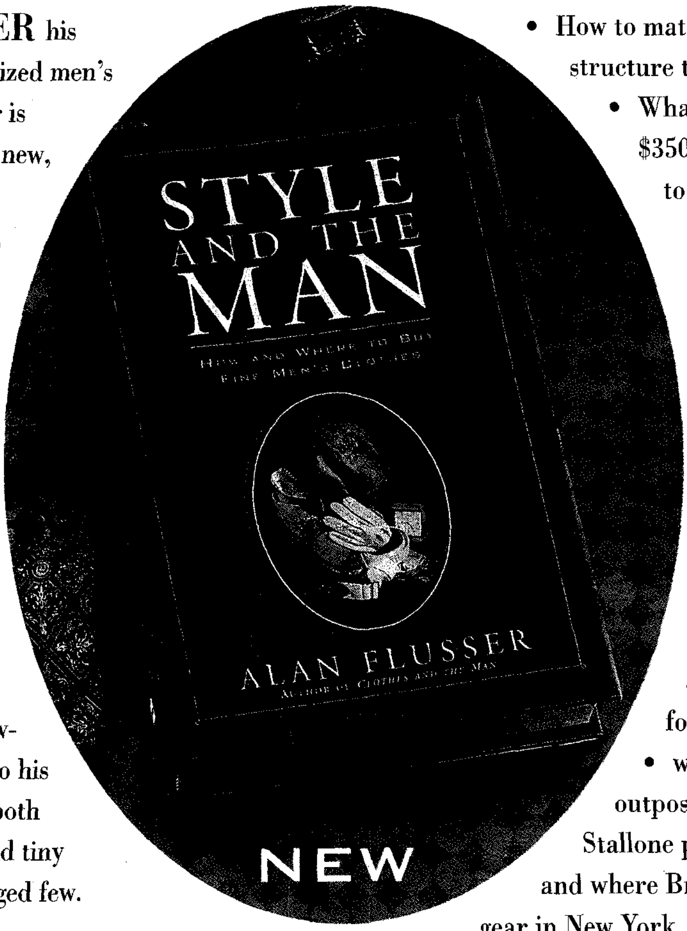
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- Who sells the world's most expensive shirts...an "excellent value" coat that will last a lifetime;
- Who makes "a luxurious denim shirt that feels like silk"...the driving gloves favored by Italy's power drivers...the world's best razor;
- Which French engraver to the aristocracy will design you a family insignia, then put it on gold blazer buttons;
- How to match clothing style and structure to your physique;
- What the difference is between a $350 and a $1,500 suit — and how to be certain you're getting it;
- What the new luggage of choice has become for international travel;
- Where you can test a new golf putter in a net-lined room;
- Who offers 45 glove styles ...50 white shirt fabrics ...5,000 pipe styles;
- Where you can find a great belt for $15... a museum-quality belt buckle for $10,000;
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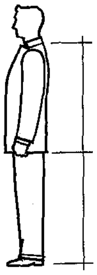

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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

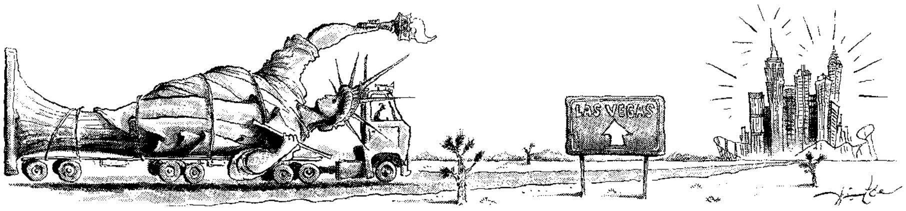
THE LITTLE APPLE

An architecture critic reports from a city that never shuts down: I'm standing with my guide on one of the corner terraces near the very top of the Chrysler Building. Above me are the well-known eagle gargoyles modelled on the hood ornaments used by the carmaker that gave the building its name. I lean on the parapet and look down at the honking traffic. In one direction I can make out the Empire State Building; in another I can see the Brooklyn Bridge and the Statue of Liberty. But where the Hudson River and New Jersey ought to be is a desert plateau hemmed in by a craggy mountain range.

I'm looking down not on Lexington Avenue but on Tropicana Avenue—in Las Vegas. Standing with me is F. Neal Gaskin, Jr., a genial native of Texas, who is dressed in a windbreaker and cowboy boots, and doesn't fit my idea of a casino architect. But his firm, Gaskin & Bezanski, is responsible for one of the largest and most flamboyant new casino hotels in Las Vegas: the New York–New York, which opens in early January. Gaskin has brought me up to the thirty-fifth floor to show me the view. In the original Chrysler Building, I would be on the fifty-eighth floor, but I'm still impressed.

The hotel portion of the edifice, consisting of a dozen connected towers, and including a forty-seven-story facsimile of the Empire State Building, holds two thousand and thirty-five guest rooms. At street level is a series of false fronts, among them SoHo cast-iron buildings, a sketchy Whitney Museum, and the Art Deco Airlines Terminal Building, which used to stand at the corner of Park Avenue and Forty-second Street. They form a backdrop to a Lilliputian Brooklyn Bridge and a hundred-and-fifty-foot-tall Statue of Liberty. A giant roller coaster loops and snakes across the rooftops, giving the impression that Coney Island has somehow crashed into lower Manhattan.

Can an entire city be reduced to a cutout reproduction? I have come here assuming that New York–New York is the ultimate Las Vegas folly. Instead, I find it oddly affecting. I've always liked doll houses and other miniatures, and this toylike Gotham has some of that charm. But as an architect can I take it seriously? At one level, the answer is obviously no. Although this is a real building—a *big* real building—it is more like a movie set than like a work of architecture. To paraphrase the art critic Robert Hughes, New York–New York is to architecture as telephone sex is to sex. Still, I'm not prepared to write it off entirely. Transplanting Manhattan skyscrapers to the Nevada desert and calling them a casino has the same goofy logic as transplanting the Baths of Caracalla from Rome to Manhattan and calling them Penn Station. Imitation in this case is a similar form of sincere flattery.



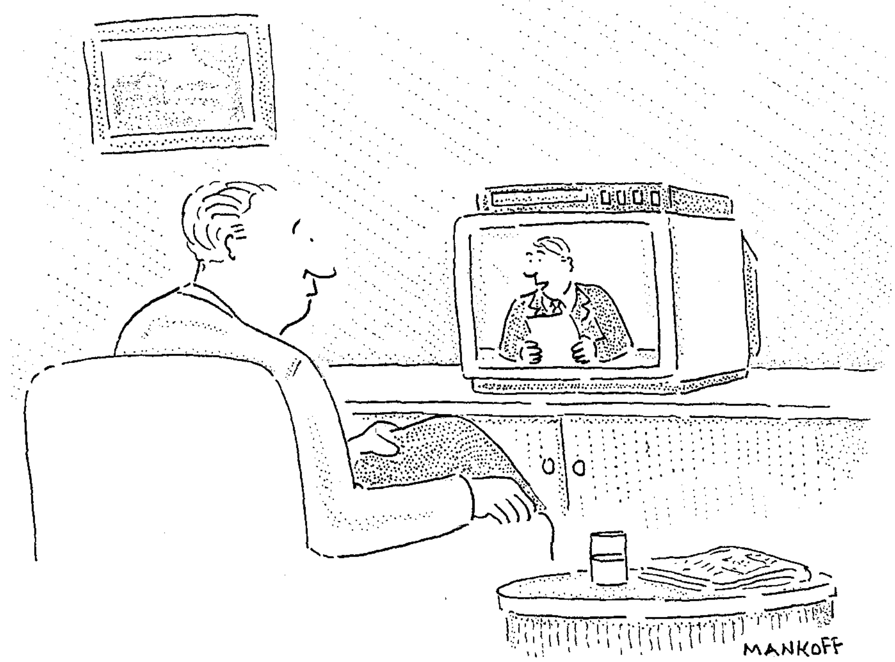
ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

It is in the nature of things that the old will usually turn up their noses at the new, and I mention to Gaskin that he ought to be prepared for some ribbing from the New York press. "We went to a lot of trouble to make the buildings look as real as possible," he replies. "I didn't want people to think that this was just a joke." By Las Vegas architectural standards, which admittedly are not exacting, these are reasonable replicas. Compared with the Excalibur Hotel Casino, say, whose King Arthur castle looks about as substantial as a cardboard pop-up, New York–New York looks *tangible.* And bunched skyscrapers really do recall the dramatic, foreshortened panorama of downtown Manhattan, as seen, say, from the Staten Island Ferry. In the bright Nevada sun, though, the colors are considerably more vivid—there is no grime on these towers.

In a book called "When the Cathedrals Were White," Le Corbusier made the point that edifices like Chartres and Notre-Dame were themselves once modern. As I squint up at the naïve confection that is New York–New York, I can't help thinking of the time when the skyscrapers of Manhattan, too, were white, when the Empire State Building was brand new, and when the jukebox top of the Chrysler Building sparkled in its sweet innocence.

THE FIRE WITHIN

Over a six-month period this year, ten barns, some historic, were burned along a three-mile stretch of rural road in Woodstock, New York. Three of them were destroyed. Arson was clearly the cause of all the fires—



"Jitters on Wall Street today over rumors that Alan Greenspan said, 'A rich man can as soon enter Heaven as a camel fit through the eye of a needle.'"

• •

each had been started with a road flare. By September, it was no secret that the police believed the arsonist was a fireman. Since the Woodstock Fire Department is all-volunteer, the police knew that if they were right they'd also be looking to arrest one of their neighbors. "It was a nightmare," Woodstock's acting police chief, Paul Ragonese, recalled. "My guys were investigating people they've known their whole lives. I told all of them that if this was too much they could opt out. But nobody did. I think they were all hoping we were wrong."

At the end of November, an arsonist tried to burn down two of RoseAnn Vinicor's barns. Her idyllic property has eight historic barns on it, and this was the third attempt to torch them. Miraculously, none of the fires had done much damage, but this time there was a witness, and when the fire alarm sounded the police moved in quickly. The man they arrested and charged was no outsider. He was Vernon Shultis, a fifty-eight-year-old lifelong resident of Woodstock, whose family had built many of the barns that were burned. Shultis is a town Highway Department worker, a thirty-six-year veteran of the Woodstock Fire Department, and a caretaker for many part-time Woodstock residents. He has pleaded not guilty in the Vinicor case, and his lawyer says that he intends to plead not guilty if he is indicted for all ten barn burnings, as is expected. The D.A. has claimed in court to have a tape recording of Shultis admitting that he set the fires.

At the Bread Alone café the morning after the arrest, rumors were flying. Some people said that Shultis had a serious drinking problem, others that he held a grudge against rich New Yorkers who could afford second homes in Woodstock while his own family had had to split up their homestead. Nobody expressed any relief over his arrest, and some were in tears.

Donald (Sparky) Allen was eighteen when he became a volunteer firefighter in Woodstock. Now thirty-nine, he is both a local volunteer and a professional fireman, in neighboring Kingston. "When I was a kid, just starting with the department, it was Vernon Shultis who showed me the ropes," he said. "Vernon told me stories about fires, explained how things were done. I looked up to him. When they told me it was Vernon who had started these fires, I just could not believe it. As a professional, I know that this is a very serious crime. But I have such mixed emotions, because if this were *my* father I wouldn't want him in jail."

At the local movie theatre, there was almost a fistfight when Shultis's name came up. "If it *was* an outsider, would we care?" one shopkeeper said angrily. "Would we want him to rot in jail? I think we would. But because this is Vern we're supposed to say, 'Hey, he must not have been in his right mind to do this and we must show forgiveness.' Well, when we were up nights worrying about our barns, Vernon Shultis wasn't worried about us."

"That's not the point," another Woodstocker said. "We know Vernon Shultis—we see him every day. There are dozens of acts of kindness that this man has done. We can't turn our backs on him, can we? I'm just not sure."

RoseAnn Vinicor, who bought a piece of the Shultis family's property in the early eighties, and is old enough to remember the rock festival that made Woodstock synonymous with unbridled tolerance, *is* sure. "People think that Vernon's arrest is the end of the story," she said. "But it's really just the beginning. This is a man who did the right thing for thirty-five years. He gave and gave to this town. And then he does something like this for six months and people want to forget about those thirty-five years. But I can't. Vernon was my safety net, the one who kept an eye on this place and told us what needed fixing and what needed to be done to keep it up. Let us wait and see, because if this could happen to Vernon Shultis, believe me, it could happen to any of us."

LET'S DEW IT

JUST as the end of the year seemed to be arriving without any real economic catastrophe in America, a borderline emergency was announced on Monday, December 16th: Mountain Dew, Pepsi-Cola's high-calorie, high-caffeine pale-chartreuse soda in the reliable green-and-red can, was under threat. Coca-Cola was on the verge of presenting to the world a big new enemy called Surge—another high-calorie, high-caffeine citrus concoction, which will be available in green-and-red cans pretty much everywhere by mid-January. When this bulletin slipped out of Coca-Cola's headquarters, it seemed likely that everyone at Pepsi-Cola might be forced to curtail all holiday plans and prepare for combat.

A call to a youngish-sounding executive, Brad Shaw, at Pepsi-Cola's office in Somers, New York, went like this:

Are you going to have to cancel a ski trip to Colorado or anything?

"Not at all. If you take a Mountain Dew imitation to diehard Dew fans, they're going to dislike it before they even taste it. Let's just let this thing take its course—beginning by *not* cancelling ski trips. I know I'm still planning on going snowboarding in Vermont."

Do you drink it?

"Do I drink it? Yeah, I do. I honestly love Dew. I drink several a day."

Do you think people have a big fantasy about Mountain Dew?

"A fantasy?"

About being on top of a mountain drinking it?

"I don't know if I'd go that far."

So no one's in a panic about Surge.

"No. Coke's done it before. They've tried with Mello Yello. RC's tried it with Kick."

Do you think young people really like Mountain Dew best?

"Umm. Younger people? Well, that's what Dew's been about forever. Youth."

Do older people ever drink it?

"Sure. I'm thirty and I drink it."

A conversation with a veteran Dew drinker went like this:

Why do you drink Dew?

"It tastes like limes and the way you think gasoline would taste, and it doesn't leave an oil slick in your mouth."

What about Surge?

"I don't think it stands a chance."

THE PLUCK OF THE IRISH

RECENTLY, Liz Allen, the crime correspondent of the Dublin *Sunday Independent*, sat in the city's dingy Ritz café, on Middle Abbey Street, lit a cigarette, and started to count the number of recent gangland killings that had occurred in Dublin—"fourteen since August, 1995," she said. She is twenty-seven, blond, and petite, and she had just been writing about the latest victim in a drug-related murder. Allen has been reporting on crime for more than three years, first for the daily *Irish Independent*, then for the *Sunday Tribune*, and, since last July, for the *Sunday Independent*. She was hired to replace Veronica Guerin, who was gunned down in her car in June, apparently by killers working for one of the gangs that Guerin was investigating.

Liz Allen

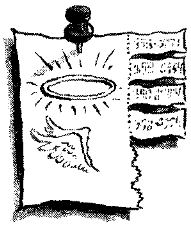
"I was driving out of Garda"—Irish police—"headquarters, in Harcourt Square," Allen recalled, "when I got a call on my mobile saying that Veronica had been shot. I didn't believe she was dead. She was so dynamic." Allen said that she knows the names of the men on the motorbike who drew up beside Guerin's car, as well as the identity of the man who ordered the shooting. Her tone was brisk and unemotional, implying that if she had any fear about being seen as the "next Veronica Guerin" she was not going to dwell on it.

After accepting Guerin's old job, she got letters of support from readers, and advice from police to be cautious. "Being a woman helps," she said, without a trace of a smile. "You're not as threatening as a man." She is clearly addicted to the work. "It's a challenge," she said. "So far, I haven't received any threats—well, maybe veiled threats. But would I still do it if I was really threatened?" She dragged on her cigarette, then added, "I think I would, but ask me in six months' time."

CELESTIAL NAVIGATION

FOR Patrick Kilhenny, this is the best time of year to put people in touch with their angels. The holidays, he says, leave many people yearning for heavenly companionship, especially when they're prodded by Hollywood, which has recently released two new films featuring haloed heroes, "The Preacher's Wife" (Denzel Washington) and "Michael" (John Travolta). As a regional director of the Inner Peace Movement, Kilhenny runs workshops and gives private consultations to help people with their angel facilitation. Advertising by word of mouth and by the sort of notices with tear-off tabs you see in laundromats, he has been doing angel facilitation for the past ten years, in and around New York. "It's busy," he said the other day, while waiting for clients in a spartan consultation room he rents in the East Thirties. "I've been getting turnouts in the hundreds up in Albany and Buffalo."

Kilhenny is in his mid-forties. His brown hair is cut in a square, boyish way, and crowns an expression of kindly wistfulness. He wore a pale-pink shirt with satiny-looking stripes and a gray corduroy blazer with elbow patches. He said that each of us has a personal team of angels who have lived several lives of increasing good will. "It sometimes takes something big—a heart attack or a bad relationship—for people to let their angels in," he explained. "But they're there, trying to get through to you on a daily basis. You know they're around when you feel goosebumps." Children, he added, are especially aware of angelic visitations—thus, the imaginary friend.



Kilhenny himself was not always so attuned. "I was a nuclear engineer for the Navy—I was all wrapped up in my intellect," he said. "I was living in Hawaii when I took my first Inner Peace Movement seminar and started learning how to communicate with my angels. Now I talk to them every day. You just need to practice." Although Kilhenny has been put off by the way Hollywood tends to present angels, he's now inclined to be less critical. "Angels are not these Goody Two-shoes running around—they're just men and women. Look at it this way: we're all angels-in-training ourselves. But if it helps you to think of Denzel Washington, go ahead." ♦

"The Little Apple," Witold Rybczynski; "The Fire Within," Martha Frankel; "Let's Dew It," Alison Rose; "The Pluck of the Irish," Colm Tóibín; "Celestial Navigation," Lauren MacIntyre.

ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE MAN WHO DISAPPEARED

At one time, a whole generation of Times reporters wished they could write like McCandlish Phillips. Then he left them all for God.

BY KEN AULETTA

LAST April 12th, a crowd filled the First Church, in Wenham, Massachusetts, for the funeral of Nathaniel C. Nash, the Frankfurt bureau chief of the New York *Times*. Nash, a much admired reporter, had been among the thirty-five passengers and crew killed when the airplane carrying Secretary of Commerce Ronald Brown crashed into a Croatian mountain. Seated among the journalist's friends and family were some two dozen newspaper employees, including the *Times*' publisher, Arthur O. Sulzberger, Jr.

There were three speakers at the service, including the rector of the First Church and the pastor of a neighboring church. The principal speaker was John McCandlish Phillips, Jr., and he caused a stir. Phillips, who is six feet six but weighs only a hundred and sixty-one pounds, loomed over Nash's coffin. Wearing a baggy gray striped suit jacket and black pants, and with his long, thin neck sticking like a pole through a too large collar hoop, the sixty-eight-year-old Phillips looked like an overdressed vagrant. When he reached the pulpit, he began to weep. When he spoke, he cited Scripture, scolding those who had sinned and assuring the bereaved that Nash awaited them "in a better place." Nathaniel, he said, "was lovely in life here, a friend of friends, and I expect to see him later there."

Phillips spoke at the behest of the Nash family, who wanted people to understand how devoted Nathaniel had been to Phillips's Pentecostal church group, the New Testament Missionary Fellowship. Nash had joined the group as a Harvard freshman, and after he graduated, in 1973, Phillips helped recruit him to the *Times* as a copyboy. In those days, McCandlish Phillips, as his byline read, was a star reporter at the *Times*, and was the newspaperman whom Nash most admired. And Nash was not the only one who felt that way. Among the outstanding journalists who worked in the newsroom in those days—Gay Talese, David Halberstam, Gloria Emerson, J. Anthony Lukas, Richard Reeves—Phillips was widely thought to be the most gifted writer.

Many of those who crowded the spare New England church in Wenham did not know about Nash's spiritual side. "Nash was close to his God," Arthur Sulzberger, Jr., says. "You could have a beer with Nash and not know that." Nor did many at the church know that during the years Nathaniel Nash lived in New York, in the seventies and early eighties, he and Phillips and two dozen or so others met on Tuesday evenings and Sunday mornings to pray and to share their faith that salvation comes only to those who are "born again" as believers in Jesus Christ. Each spring and fall, Fellowship church members trolled the Columbia University campus, reciting Scripture and dispensing literature. Nash played the guitar and Phillips slapped his thigh as the group sang hymns.

SULZBERGER, like many others at Nash's funeral, had never met McCandlish Phillips before. Others at the *Times* had known Phillips—in the newsroom he was called John—but had not seen him for decades, although they vividly remembered stories he had written. Gay Talese, who left the paper in 1965 and became a best-selling author, says, "He was the Ted Williams of the young reporters. He was a natural. There was only one guy I thought I was not the equal of, and that was McCandlish Phillips."

Colleagues on the *Times* knew Phillips as an uncommonly polite and generous man who never drank, smoked, cursed, or played cards. He kept a Bible on his desk, and once a week, surrounded by a handful of *Times* employees, he conducted Bible readings

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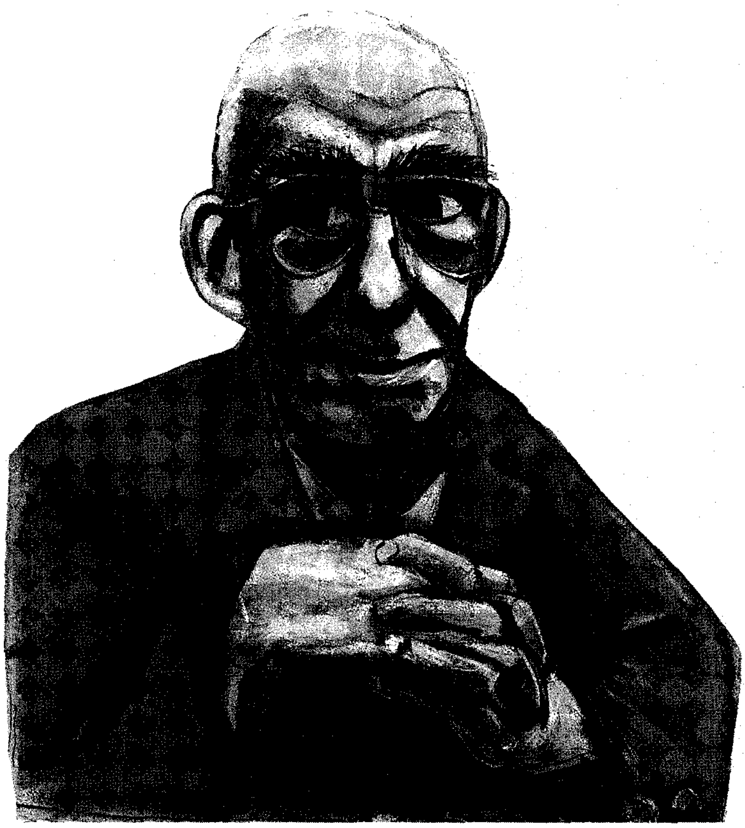
in the back of the third-floor newsroom. To competitors like Pete Hamill, then a columnist for the *Post* and now the editor-in-chief of the *Daily News*, he was "a gentle character" who "seemed miscast as a newsman" among the sharks from what were until the early nineteen-sixties seven competing daily newspapers. Or so it appeared, until Hamill read Phillips's copy. He recalls, "He used the senses. He looked. He listened. He smelled. He touched. There was a texture to his writing that was sensual." Phillips's stories often focussed on forgotten people: the homeless for whom the Port Authority Bus Terminal became a place not just to keep warm but to socialize; the typesetter who saved a literary treasure from oblivion. Phillips reported fires and murders, he covered Albany and the United Nations, but he was best known as a stylish feature writer. When editors wanted someone to bring a fresh and humorous eye to Abraham Lass, a remarkable Brooklyn high-school principal who was also an accomplished ragtime piano player, or to chronicle the last piece of cheesecake sold at Lindy's, Phillips was their man. He could write about Wisconsin that the state "bobs on a sea of curdled milk," or describe a jazz group in which "one player in this noisome pestilence looked something like a blond werewolf, with a veil of hair growing across his face."



"Phillips is not interested in winning a Pulitzer," says Gay Talese. "Talk about marching to a different drummer. He is not even in the same jungle."

ANDREA VENTURA

It was a brilliant career, but in 1973, after twenty-one years at the *Times*, Phillips startled his colleagues by announcing that he was quitting. He was forty-six. He fell out of touch with his former co-workers, though they would occasionally hear that he had been spotted in Morningside Heights, trying to convert Columbia students. When Phillips left the *Times*, he had had a full head of dark hair, cut short around the temples. At Nash's funeral, former colleages were startled by the change in his appearance. His ears stood out starkly beneath strands of gray hair at his temples. His complexion was sallow. He looked like an apparition.

What remained unchanged was the ready smile, the somewhat gawky manner, the sweetness. And, for the contingent from the *Times*, memories of a legendary journalist more interested in the truth and texture of a story than in scoring a scoop. And a question: Why did a man with so much talent walk away from it?

JOHN McCANDLISH PHILLIPS graduated from high school in 1947 and went to work at a weekly newspaper in Brookline, Massachusetts. There a colleague introduced him to the Baptist Church, which affected him deeply. But the transforming experience of his life came in Baltimore in 1952, five weeks before he was to be discharged from the Army. He had continued to attend Baptist services, and at a service one night, while the congregation was praying, a lay minister bellowed, "Are you willing to go anywhere in the world and do anything Christ asks of you? If you are, stand up!" Phillips did not stand up. "But every word of that went right into me," he recalls.

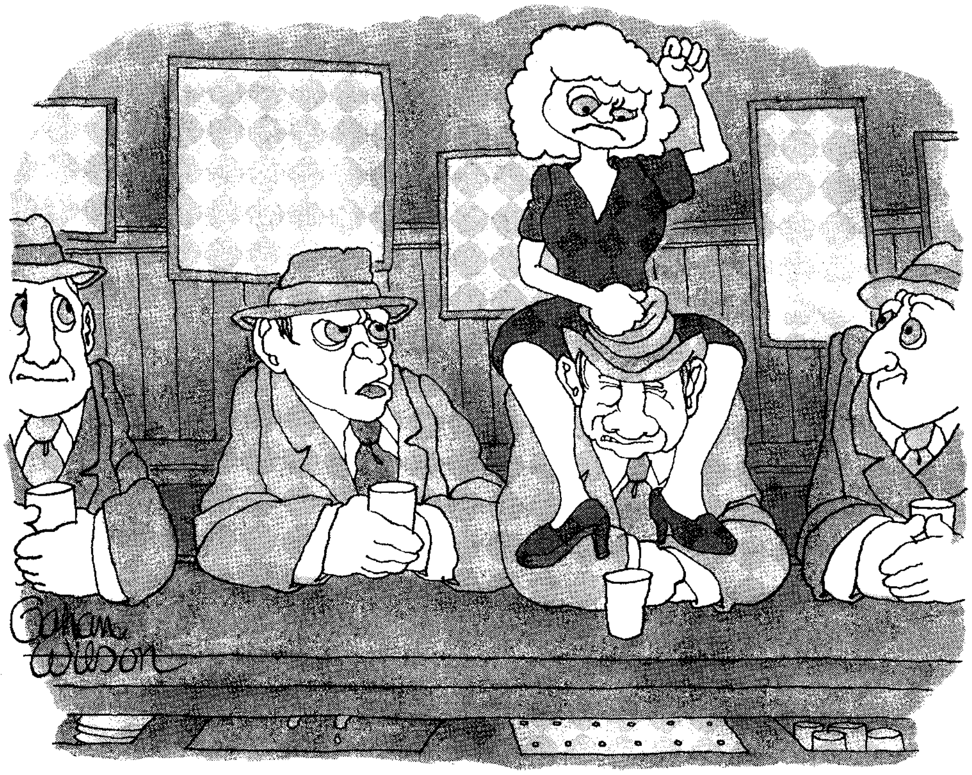
Four weeks later, those words were still with him. Restlessly, Master Sergeant Phillips rose before the 6 A.M. reveille and walked to the small chapel on the Army base. "The morning was a low blue," he told me. "It was quiet. I sensed the presence of God with me and I went into that chapel and said yes to God on the basis of that challenge. I told Him I'd go anywhere in the world and do anything He wanted me to do." Phillips expected that he would become either a preacher or a missionary.

First, though, he took the train home to Boston to stay with his father, who was sick. He boarded the train in Baltimore, and as it approached Penn Station God spoke to him. "Get off the train" is the command he remembers. "I didn't understand it. I simply got off the train." He found a cheap hotel near Times Square, and the next morning he bought copies of the *Herald Tribune* and the *Times*. On a *Times* classified page he spotted an ad for an editorial trainee. He fell to his knees beside the bed and prayed for guidance. Again, he heard the voice of God, telling him, he remembers, that he "had a mission to go to the New York *Times* and get a job."

What did he hear when God spoke? "You don't hear through your outer ear," he explained. "You hear through your inner ear. You are conscious of being talked to, but you don't hear the words."

Wearing his Army uniform, Phillips left his dingy hotel room and walked to the *Times*, where the personnel office was crowded with applicants for the editorial-trainee job. Phillips was in the habit of saying "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," and this made a favorable impression, as did his assurance that he could live on twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents a week.

And he did, finding a room at the Y.M.C.A. on West Twenty-third Street off Seventh Avenue, for ten dollars and fifty cents a week, and eating supper at the nearby Automat, where for forty-five



"She's no good for you, Harry."

• •

cents he could get a plate of three hot vegetables, mashed potatoes, a dish of prunes, and a roll with butter. Most weeks, he managed to save two dollars to send to his mother, and each week he put fifty cents or so in the collection plate of the Baptist church.

His job was not glamorous. The city room, on the third floor, stretched for an entire block, from Forty-third Street to Forty-fourth Street, and was filled with the sound of telephones, pounding Royal and Underwood typewriters, creaking swivel chairs, blaring microphone summonses for reporters to appear at an editor's desk, shouts of "Copy!" and "Boy!"

There was a lot of gambling in the newsroom. Arthur Gelb, who joined the paper as a copyboy in 1944, rose to managing editor, and is today president of the New York Times Company Foundation, recalls that gambling was once so prevalent that the managing editor, Edwin Leland James, "hired two bookies as copyboys. James bet. We all bet on the horses. They paid off with rolls of cash." McCandlish Phillips lugged his Bible everywhere, but he did not try to impose his values on others. He was awed by the newsroom and the eminences who inhabited it—Meyer (Mike) Berger, who wrote the "About New York" column; Peter Kihss, who kept (and generously shared) meticulous files on every subject he ever reported on; Homer Bigart, who, like the TV detective Columbo, was not afraid to ask the childlike question that unlocked the story. It was a room filled with eccentrics, and the copyboy who read a Bible at his desk, addressed editors as "Sir," and resembled Ichabod Crane fit right in. When someone called out "Copy!" Phillips was hard to miss, loping like a giraffe across the room.

Early in 1955, Phillips was promoted to reporter and assigned to the "shack" that the *Times* maintained across from Brooklyn police headquarters. He worked as a legman and learned the tricks of reporting—in particular, the art of the interview. At one press conference, reporters were shouting rude questions at a museum director. As Phillips recalls it, "I just sidled over to the director and asked him a series of quiet questions, gentleman to gentleman, which he answered readily. I never veered from that in all my reporting experience. It seemed comfortable and decent. And it was by far the most effective way to interview."

What made the newsroom take notice of him was not a story for the paper but a satire he wrote that treated life in the Brooklyn shack as if it were a foreign posting. Published in the August, 1955, edition of *Times Talk*, the newspaper's house organ, it contained such observations as "Policemen are remarkable linguists. They do their calls in hundreds of languages, none of which owe any debt to English." And this:

> Two weeks ago, a man of about 55 who looked as though he had been made out of scrap iron and old revolver handles dropped in to explain that he had just been sprung from the Tombs; that some old friends had taken the trouble to beat him up his first night out and that he wasn't afraid of nobody, especially cops. He wanted to know why the newspapers suppressed all sorts of important things, like prison conditions and graft among politicians.
>
> "It's a plot," I told him. "But what can I do? I'm just one of the little ones." This cheered him and he left without striking me.

Arthur Gelb remembers the satire—and the new byline, which was then John M. Phillips—vividly. "We all said, 'Who is John Phillips? Who wrote this wonderful piece?' I can't think of any other case where a star was born in the newsroom and overnight everyone in the newsroom knew who he was." Phillips was soon promoted to a desk in the newsroom's next-to-last row.

PROFESSIONALLY, Phillips began to soar; his personal life was not so smooth. His father, a sales representative, who had separated from his mother when their son was three, died in 1958. Now his mother—with whom he'd moved so often that he switched grammar schools thirteen times before the age of twelve—was penniless. He invited her to live with him in an apartment he had rented in Brooklyn. This provoked tension between them, and it exploded in an ugly way in 1959. Gay Talese recalled the evening: he was working on the night rewrite desk when an editor exclaimed, "Jesus, I just heard from the city desk that there's some problem with John. The cops are over there. John's been breaking plates, and his mother called the cops."

The argument was over his mother's unwillingness to take off her spike heels, which were gouging holes in a new floor. Phillips remembers that they had words and he smashed his fist through a window. He said he never physically threatened his mother, but she summoned the police. "I was taken to Kings County Hospital, and I was essentially held there for six or seven days," he recalled. He was subjected to psychiatric examination. After that, his mother moved to an apartment in Queens. And although they were still on speaking terms and got together with Phillips's younger sister on holidays, they remained somewhat distant for the rest of her life. (She died in 1991.)

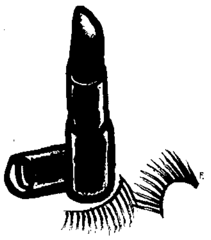
Around the newsroom, Phillips kept pretty much to himself. Sometimes he had dinner at the home of Gay Talese and his wife, Nan, or went across the street to Gough's to eat with colleagues. But he never went drinking with the boys. Nicholas Pileggi, who was a police reporter for the Associated Press in the fifties and sixties, remembered that when the police raided a porn parlor they would confiscate movies. Then the cops and the brass from the old Police Headquarters, at 240 Centre Street, would join reporters at the *Times'* office across the street, set up an 8-mm. projector, and hang a sheet backed by a blanket over the window to serve as a screen. Every time they did this, Phillips would step outside and take a walk around the block. Pileggi, who says he played poker instead, recalls, "These guys were so retarded. They once forgot the blanket and projected right through the bedsheet. So the outside of Police Headquarters had a movie of Lucky Pierre in his socks chasing this lady around the bed!"

Phillips rarely dated. Since 1950, he says, he has dated only one woman, a former Associated Press reporter. He stopped seeing her when the Scriptures instructed him that one cannot "yoke" a believer and a nonbeliever. "I am not susceptible to loneliness because I am not alone," he says.

PERHAPS the most influential person in McCandlish Phillips's life was a woman he met in 1961, in Miami. He was there on an assignment to search for secret United States government bases where exiled Cubans were training to invade their homeland. Once, on a night off, he got lost and came across a small Spanish mission, where he sat and listened to the service, which was in Spanish. An older woman who spoke English came over and helped him translate. This was Hannah Lowe, who was then sixty-six years old. Her husband, Thomas Lowe, had formed Pentecostal congregations in Baltimore in the late nineteen-twenties, and had then gone as a missionary to South America, where he died in 1941. She had continued his work, and had spent much of her life since as a missionary in Colombia and in Israel.

A year later, Phillips again met Mrs. Lowe by chance when she visited New York to preach. Phillips was awed by her devotion. She returned to South America, and they met the next year at a Christian businessmen's breakfast in New York. He persuaded her to stay. Over the next several years, they would pray together, and they organized a church, called the New Testament Missionary Fellowship, recruiting members, spreading the gospel that there was, in his words, "a priesthood of all believers." This church believes that pornography, drugs, abortion, and any form of fornication (including premarital sex and homosexuality) are sins—although, unlike the religious right, it does not champion government intervention to regulate behavior.

In 1963, Mrs. Lowe and another woman moved to a third-floor apartment at 116th Street and Broadway; the following year, Phillips moved to a two-room apartment on the seventh floor of the same building, where he still lives. Often they dined together at the New Asia Restaurant, near 112th Street and Broadway. After dinner, he went home and sometimes read books; most often, he read Scripture and prayed.



In the morning, a prayer group convened for an hour at seven-thirty. After that, Phillips entered the secular world at the *Times*. He was enraptured by his job. In 1963, when A. M. Rosenthal was summoned from Tokyo and put in charge of the city desk, with Arthur Gelb as his deputy, Phillips and Talese and others were excited. Rosenthal was known to want better writing in the paper. While he was still in Tokyo, he had already decided that Talese and Phillips were the two writers he admired most. Of Phillips, Rosenthal recalls, "He was an original. He had a very telling eye. He had a quiet merriment. His writing wasn't heavy."

Phillips's most celebrated story was written in 1965, when Rosenthal and Gelb assigned him to investigate the life of Daniel Burros, who, at twenty-eight, had become the leader of the state Ku Klux Klan. Rosenthal had received a tip that Burros, who had also been a ranking official in the American Nazi Party, was Jewish. For five days, with help from a team of reporters, Phillips dug.

When he had the facts, he got up early one day and took the subway to Ozone Park, Queens, hoping to stop Burros as he left his apartment. He intercepted him outside a barbershop, and they walked to a luncheonette and found a booth. Burros ordered a Coke, Phillips had scrambled eggs. They talked about the Klan, about how Burros had come to embrace Nazism, about his service in the Army and the pictures in his wallet. Then Phillips revealed that he knew Burros had been reared in a Jewish home. Burros demanded angrily, "Are you going to print that?"

Phillips said that it was not within his power to make that decision, but the fact that Burros's parents were married in a Jewish ceremony was a matter of public record.

Burros put his hand inside his coat and told Phillips that he had a vial of acid in his pocket, and that he would kill him in the luncheonette. Phillips nervously glanced down at the knife and fork near Burros's fingertips, then calmly put a dollar down on the table, and rose to leave. Burros followed him outside. As Rosenthal and Gelb later wrote, in "One More Victim: The Life and Death of an American-Jewish Nazi," Phillips "had the story in his notebook" but decided to stay and try to convert this man who seemed so full of hate. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," Phillips told Burros. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

"You're trying to con me," Burros snapped. They walked for a while, and before they parted they shook hands. Phillips went back to the office, and all day Burros kept calling, one moment pleading, the next threatening. A security guard hovered while Phillips wrote his story. That night, two detectives drove Phillips home. Gelb and Rosenthal held the story, hoping to confirm that Burros had been bar mitzvahed; when they did, Phillips wrote an insert, and the story was published. When Daniel

Burros saw the story, on the front page of the *Times*, he shot himself to death.

These events became a sensation, the more so when the usually tender Phillips seemed to exhibit no guilt at the news that Burros had committed suicide. Rosenthal remembers the conversation this way: "He said, and this was the first time his religion entered into his work, 'It was the will of God'—it gives me shivers to say it!—'and you were the instrument of God!' "

It was common at the time for publishers to turn out quickie paperback books on big news stories, and New American Library wanted to do one on Burros. Hollywood studios expressed interest in a movie. Rosenthal and Gelb invited Phillips to lunch. Phillips brought along Hannah Lowe and his Bible. The two editors outlined the book proposal and discussed movie rights. Phillips, the editors remember, opened the Bible and, in a booming voice, read passages aloud. The crowded restaurant fell silent. Embarrassed, Rosenthal and Gelb slid down in their seats. Phillips, citing Scripture—"Touch not the spoil"—declined the book offer, having decided that he could not enrich himself from a tragedy.

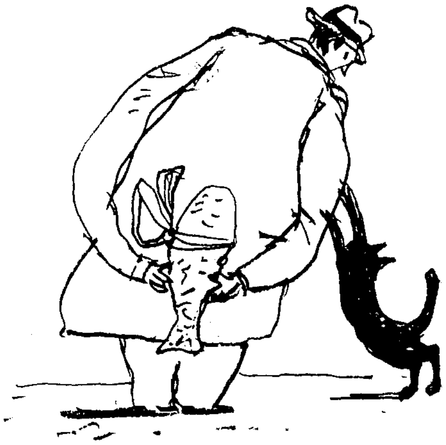
MARVIN SIEGEL, who joined the *Times* as an editor in 1966 and who lives in Phillips's building but rarely sees him, recalled that assigning Phillips to a story was like having money in the bank. "As a combination writer-reporter, I don't think anyone topped him," Siegel said recently. He did not besiege editors with story ideas, as, for example, Gay Talese did, but he could be depended upon to produce at least three beautifully crafted stories a week.

As the sixties wore on, and as hair lengthened in the newsroom, Phillips seemed an increasingly anomalous figure. "He was definitely regarded as somewhat strange," said a former colleague who had been on assignments overseas and barely knew him. "He was widely said to be a religious fanatic of some sort." This reporter admired Phillips's prose, and the fact that he kept his religion strictly segregated from his work. This separation, however, was becoming harder to maintain.

A sense of mission was building within Phillips. It expressed itself in a book he wrote in 1970, "The Bible, the Supernatural, and the Jews." Its thesis was that the Devil plotted to get people interested in the supernatural in order to lead them down the "path of spiritual ruination." He denounced the forces of "evil" that encouraged drug use and promiscuity, and warned that these forces were "multiplying and spreading." The book coincided with a new chapter in Phillips's life. He wanted to do something else. He didn't want to move to the Washington bureau or become a foreign correspondent. He aspired to write essays, book reviews, maybe a sports column. Although the *Times* bent the rules for him—granting him a leave to finish the book, for example—he was discontented.

Phillips was obsessed with a story that no one else seemed to take seriously: the life and art of a man named Otto Griebling, a circus clown Phillips had first seen in 1952, when he was in the Army in Baltimore. Phillips believed that Griebling was a great artist, and for years he was haunted by the idea that Griebling, although he'd worked at his trade for more than half a century, had gained neither fame nor reward. Whenever the circus came to town, Phillips would pester his editors to assign a story about Otto the Clown. ("Griebling's clown," he wrote, in a 1974 collection of essays, "was harassed and futile, truly pathetic, yet he was also limitlessly patient and persistent and devoted. The things that menaced him were entirely unseen; they were private torments locked within some chamber of his consciousness and showing only on his face. For a circus clown to seek his effects in *implied psychology* rather than in plain and overt acts; for him to rely on a *suggestion* of an inward state rather than an outward showing of things, is virtually a defiance of the form.")

Phillips was particularly incensed in 1972 and 1973 by public accusations by parents that their college-age children were being brainwashed by elders of the New Testament Missionary Fellowship. His church, he believed, was founded on democratic principles. Phillips pleaded with editors to assign stories about what he condemned as a new wave of McCarthyism, this one aimed at born-again Christians. He was bothered by the *Times*' seeming indifference. In turn, some editors believed that a change had come over Phillips. "He began to filter things through a religious prism," Marvin Siegel says. Editors became nervous as, increasingly, he prayed for guidance while he was working on stories.



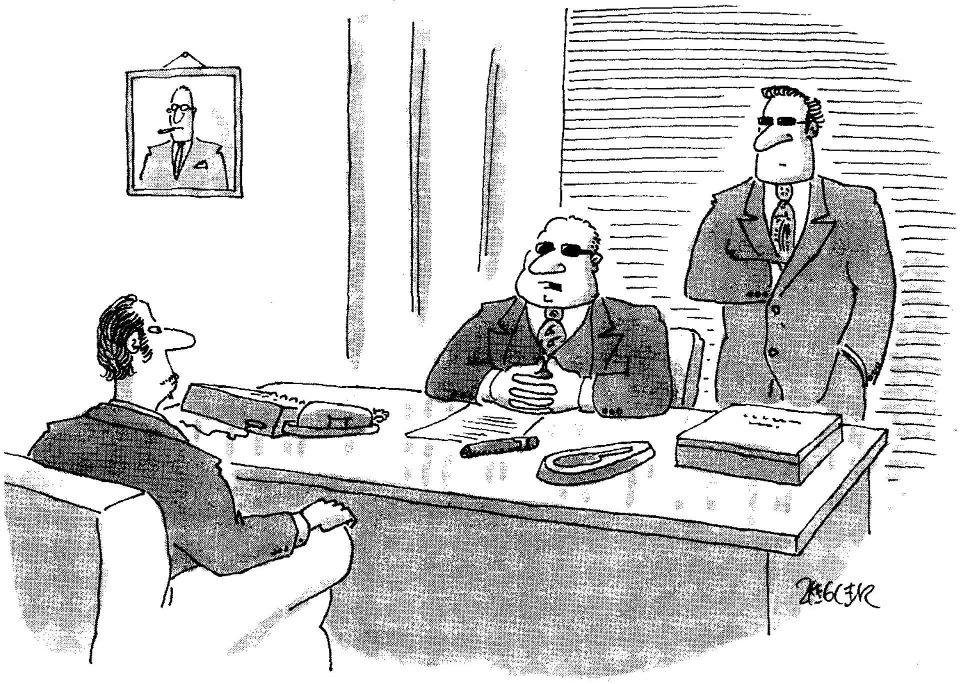
Phillips was also tired—emotionally spent by the toll that being an empathetic reporter can take. "If what you are covering is 'moving' and you are not moved by it, you will not move anyone with it," he says. In December of 1973, after twenty-one years at the *Times*, John Phillips told his editors that he was resigning his job, which then paid twenty-six thousand five hundred dollars a year.

It was not especially unusual for gifted or ambitious writers to exit the *Times*. David Halberstam, who left in 1967, said recently, "The rest of us sat around and talked about what we wanted to do. He never did." When colleagues in the newsroom learned that Phillips was quitting, they assumed that he wanted to pursue a religious life. This belief was reinforced when Phillips virtually disappeared. God, it was often said around the *Times*, had spoken to Long John.

Phillips himself says that it was not that simple. He says that he was looking for a bigger stage and felt that the institution could not bend enough to accommodate its writers. "I wanted to go higher and have more scope," Phillips said he told Rosenthal. But former associates, including Rosenthal, don't believe that he walked away out of mere ambition. "Phillips is not interested in winning a Pulitzer Prize," Gay Talese said. "He is not interested in demeaning or finding flaws. He wants to redeem people. Talk about marching to a different drummer! Phillips is not even in the same jungle."

Before Phillips left the *Times*, he worked out a freelance arrangement that permitted him to write occasionally. He was contacted about writing for a morning television show, and doing feature stories for a local TV station, but such jobs held no allure. He thought of writing for magazines, of becoming an editor, but he was painfully shy. He had no network of friends and was not a generator of story ideas. He waited for the phone to ring with assignments. It didn't.

In the next eight years, McCandlish Phillips's byline occasionally appeared in the *Times*. His 1974 collection—"City Notebook: A Reporter's Portrait of a Vanishing New York"—was not even reviewed by the *Times*. His income, which he neatly itemized on a reporter's pad, fell to ten thousand three hundred and eighty-three dollars in 1976. He stopped writing for the *Times*, he said, because the paper wanted features that took the better part of a week and paid him too little for the effort. For the past fifteen years or so, Phillips has written occasional pieces for church journals. With the exception of Nathaniel Nash, he lost touch with former co-workers. Hannah Lowe, with whom he founded his church, moved to Jerusalem, where she died of a stroke in 1983, at the age of eighty-seven.



"Our current medical plan offers a three-day stay for a bullet in the groin or torso, a two-day stay for a bullet in an extremity, and an overnight for superficial head wounds."

• •

TODAY, Phillips works out of an office in a narrow bedroom that he rents in a friend's tenth-floor apartment on 116th Street. He sits at a Formica-topped metal folding table. The walls are bare of any adornments except a clock and a calendar; to his left rests a Bible and a small radio tuned to classical music; to his right stands a metal locker. Behind him, on another folding table, is a telephone, a typewriter, a computer that he doesn't use much, and stacks of church literature. A window caked with soot faces north.

Phillips spends part of his time as general manager of Thomas E. Lowe, Ltd., a small religious publishing house that he founded with Hannah Lowe. It buys remaindered religious books and reprints a handful of others, and sells them to Christian bookstores. Phillips estimates that he spends about a quarter of his time managing the firm, and in 1996 his gross pay for this was two thousand two hundred and fifty-six dollars.

The bulk of his time is devoted to the Fellowship church, of which he is an elder and administrator. The church, which relies on contributions from its members, has an income of about seventy thousand dollars a year, and pays Phillips twenty thousand dollars. With Social Security, interest on a savings account, and small stock dividends, his total income in 1995 was just under thirty thousand dollars. He helps prepare for twice-weekly prayer meetings, speaks at about a third of these, does photocopying and other errands, handles correspondence, serves as one of six trustees, and is generally available to listen. "John is like an older brother," explains Jaan Vaino, a CBS News financial executive. Jaan and Sharon Vaino's apartment, on 110th Street, is one of two sites for church gatherings. (The other is in a house the church owns in Yonkers.)

On a recent Tuesday, the group met, as it does every other Tuesday evening, in the Vainos' cramped living room. Nineteen members were present, including an N.Y.U. student and eight recent Columbia and Yale graduates, and ten other men and women who would not have looked out of place on Wall Street—except for Phillips, who wore an open, oversized red vest and a muddy yellow shirt with a red tie pinching his collar. For two hours, group members offered spontaneous prayers, sang favorite hymns, recited from the Scriptures, and invoked Jesus's good deeds. Vaino played an electronic keyboard; a professor in environmental medicine from N.Y.U. Medical Center, Roy Shore, played a clarinet; and a pin-striped executive with the Bank of New York, Philip Chamberlain, took Nathaniel Nash's place on strings, with a Colombian instrument called a tiple. There were muted cries of "Praise the Lord!" and arms stretched at times to Heaven, much as in a Baptist service. As he once climbed into the lives of people he wrote about, Phillips now showers empathy on the brethren of his church. "John is very tried in God. There is this holiness in him," remarked Helen Sun, a 1995 Yale graduate who works at CBS.

It was a relaxed evening; those present were not unlike Christmas carollers who unwind through song. Holly Vitale, who is a credit manager for a midtown company, said that she looks forward to these meetings as "an oasis, a family gathering." What helps to bind them together, members say, is John McCandlish Phillips.

It was that feeling—a belief in Phillips's largeness of spirit—that led the Nash family to call on him when the journalist was killed in Croatia. Nathaniel Cushing Nash says Phillips was "a great inspiration" as well as a "mentor" to his son. At the funeral in Wenham, Phillips was often the stern preacher, proclaiming that Satan was near. But when he spoke of his friend he became empathetic and highly personal. "He was a spacious man," Phillips said. "He carried a kind of innocence that had no tincture of naïveté in it. There was nothing narrow or confined—or confining—about Nathaniel." ♦

ANNALS OF MARRIAGE

THE DANGERS OF DEVOTION

Arthur Koestler is remembered as one of the century's great anti-authoritarians. Does the story of his marriage make a mockery of his work?

BY BERNARD AVISHAI

THIS much is known. During the evening of March 1, 1983, in the sitting room of their London house on Montpelier Square, Arthur Koestler and his wife, Cynthia, swallowed spoonfuls of honey laced with lethal quantities of barbiturates. They died together during the night. On March 3rd, their bodies were found. A note, almost certainly typed by Cynthia, instructed the maid to call the police. Koestler was in an armchair, a glass of brandy still clutched in his hand. Cynthia was lying on a sofa, her whiskey on the table beside her.

Nobody who knew Koestler well was surprised that he took his life when he did. He was seventy-seven years old, terribly sick with Parkinson's disease, and—though only a few people knew this—with terminal leukemia. And he was a member of Exit, the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity. Harold Harris, Koestler's editor, friend, and literary executor, recalled that he had borne up with wry humor and "unexpected patience." But the last time Harris saw the couple alive, five days before the end, Arthur's speech was disjointed, he was unable to stand, and he could not concentrate on what was being said to him. Cynthia phoned Harris the following day to say that Arthur had been hallucinating. George Mikes, another intimate friend, wrote later that Koestler chose "the date he chose" because a swelling had been discovered in his groin, suggesting a metastasis of the cancer.

He was remarkably well prepared. His suicide note, a "farewell message," had been composed some nine months before, in June, 1982:

> After a more or less steady physical decline over the last years, the process has now reached an acute state with added complications which make it advisable to seek self-deliverance now, before I become incapable of making the necessary arrangements.
>
> I wish my friends to know that I am leaving their company in a peaceful frame of mind, with some timid hopes for a depersonalised after-life beyond due confines of space, time and matter and beyond the limits of our comprehension. This "oceanic feeling" has often sustained me at difficult moments, and does so now, while I am writing this.

Cynthia's death came as a shock. She was not yet fifty-six years old, and she seemed vigorous. She, too, had belonged to Exit, but there was no obvious reason for her suicide other than one that she acknowledged without elaboration when she brought her husband's note up to date, probably on the night of March 1st. She added these lines, apparently intended for Harris:

> I should have liked to finish my account of working for Arthur—a story which began when our paths happened to cross in 1949. However, I cannot live without Arthur, despite certain inner resources.

When Koestler composed his farewell message, he had taken for granted that Cynthia would survive him:

> What makes it nevertheless hard to take this final step is the reflection of the pain it is bound to inflict on my few surviving friends, above all my wife Cynthia. It is to her that I owe the relative peace and happiness that I enjoyed in the last period of my life—and never before.

From the position in which their bodies were found, it seems certain that Koestler finally came to know his wife's intentions, though Harold Harris thought her decision may have been made as late as the morning of the day she added her postscript to Arthur's note. Characteristically, she seems to have been content to let her husband's note speak for her.

AT first, the suicides were reported with delicacy, usually in tandem with largely adulatory obituaries for the author of "Darkness at Noon." That novel deals with the terrors of Stalin's purge trials during the late nineteen-thirties; now it was the spring of 1983, and Stalin's heirs were dying off. It was hard to think of any other writer, except perhaps Koestler's friend George Orwell, who had so pre-

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—The New York Times

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sciently exposed the moral debauch of Soviet Marxism. "Darkness at Noon," first published in England in 1940, and then widely translated after the war, had been followed up with confident essays, a 1945 collection entitled "The Yogi and the Commissar," and then, in 1950, a riveting autobiographical contribution to Richard Crossman's anthology "The God That Failed," which established Koestler as something of a Cold War celebrity in the United States. (In 1950, the Communist daily *L'Humanité* confirmed his stature in France, grotesquely, by publishing a map pinpointing Verte Rive, Koestler's villa in Fontaine-le-Port, near Paris, apparently inviting someone to blow it up.) In a front-page obituary, the New York *Times* pronounced Koestler an "archetype of the activist Central European intellectual"—a man engaged in the defining conflicts of the interwar generation, whose life revealed their peculiar savageries.

Koestler dictates to his future wife, Cynthia, in Verte Rive, 1949.
She would become keenly aware of her obsessive connection to him.

DMITRI KESSEL/LIFE MAGAZINE, © TIME INC.

Koestler had spent his childhood in Budapest, and his adolescence in Freud's Vienna; he was back in Budapest during the abortive Communist coup of 1919. After dropping out of the Vienna Polytechnic engineering program just before graduation, he went to Zionist Palestine shortly after the onset of serious Arab resistance to the British Mandate. It was in Palestine, in 1927, that Koestler began writing, sending reports back to Vienna's liberal *Neue Freie Presse* (as it happens, Theodor Herzl's old paper). Koestler later covered the Paris of Briand and Cocteau and the Berlin of Planck's quantum and Hitler's rallies. He joined the German Communist Party and travelled hellbent through the Soviet Union at the cruellest time of the collectivizations. He returned to Paris, and wound up working for an independent wing of the Comintern. Then, after he had all but renounced Moscow, he was captured as a Red by Franco's forces in Spain, and was very nearly executed. Finally, there was an eleventh-hour flight to Portugal before the Nazis overran France, and refuge in London during the Blitz. He had been, as he put it in a memoir, "Arrow in the Blue," "accident prone."

There was little information about Cynthia's life in the obituaries. Few of Koestler's readers had ever heard of her. Melvin J. Lasky, the co-editor of the British cultural journal *Encounter*, told the New York *Times*, "Their marriage was almost impossibly close; her devotion to him was like no other wife's I have ever known." In the summer of 1983, Lasky gave over two issues of *Encounter* to Koestler, and he invited a short article about Cynthia by Mary Benson, a lifelong friend. Benson revealed that Cynthia's father, whom she adored, had killed himself when she was a young girl, and that this had "shattered" her. As for her life with Koestler, Benson pretty much stuck to a description of an empathic secretary conquering "shyness" to become his friend and partner. She had taken his dictation and helped him to get his books out. Because he loved entertaining, Benson writes, Cynthia became a thoughtful hostess and a sophisticated cook: "Her overriding feeling was how fortunate she was to share his life; it was not in her nature to realise how fortunate *he* was to have her."

BOTH the obituaries and the *Encounter* symposium gave short shrift to the work that had absorbed the last three decades of Koestler's life. Lasky included a rather apologetic essay by Brian Inglis on Koestler's growing interest in "parapsychology," but the later work seems to have induced a studied reticence among the anti-Communist intellectuals—Raymond Aron (himself near death), Sidney Hook, Maurice Cranston, David Astor—with whom Koestler had made his reputation. In a radio interview, William Phillips, the longtime editor of *Partisan Review*, praised him faintly as the author of "one great book."

What Phillips did not just come out and say was that many of Koestler's contemporaries had doubts about him. After completing his memoirs in the early nineteen-fifties—books which were often more daring in their sexual self-scrutiny than in their political ideas—Koestler had begun to write things that puzzled most admirers of his political fiction: books about science and psychology, rich in historian's polemic and technical detail. He was not alone in challenging deterministic notions of scientific discovery, or in arguing for the uncomfortable view of scientific breakthrough as disjunctive, mysterious, governed as much by perverse inspiration as observation. But he did not stop there. The publication, in

1959, of the book he considered his masterpiece, "The Sleepwalkers," seemed to announce Koestler's wholesale return to the theme he had sketched out in 1949 in "Insight and Outlook": that scientific knowledge was itself failing us in a troubling way—that our technology was outpacing our "cosmic awareness and spiritual clarity."

Koestler mounted new arguments about the limits of science during the nineteen-sixties. "The Ghost in the Machine" referred to men as "holons," at once material beings yet "absolute." He published "The Case of the Midwife Toad" in 1971, in which he seemed willing to defend the Lamarckians' generally discredited theory of evolution. "The Roots of Coincidence" seemed to be a sincere defense of ESP. Little wonder that fewer and fewer of his old admirers, no longer Marxists but still in some reasonable way materialists, took Koestler's work seriously. Many members of the scientific community regarded him as simply a crank.

At the time of Koestler's death, George Steiner summed up (and betrayed) the latent hostility toward him in a *Sunday Times* obituary:

> Close friends and admirers found the resulting brew of psychosomatic inference, mystical biology, and murky parlour tricks hard to swallow. . . . His public stance did cut him off from all but an eccentric handful in the very community which he most prized: that of the working scientists.

Only Iain Hamilton, the author of the biography "Koestler"—and with whom the biographee had broken relations for a time—tried to stitch the patches together, though in a rather too brilliant argument that cast doubt on whether he had ever been on Koestler's side. Hamilton wrote in *Encounter* that Koestler's shift into parapsychology at the end of his life was "typical of the retreat into the irrational common among ex-Communists who cannot, or refuse to, quench their thirst for the absolute with the disciplined 'irrationality' of religious dogma." The confession of his suicide note (his "timid hopes for a de-personalised after-life") suggested that the shift had been complete. First there was the God that failed, Hamilton implied, and then, presumably, the God that cannot.

THOUGH Hamilton does not refer to Cynthia's death, the tone and direction of his essay suggest how skepticism about Koestler's work and questions about the joint suicide might reinforce one another. Some of Koestler's former allies began to speak of the suicides as the culmination of a career become "eccentric," and the questions soon became attacks. The first salvo came from Alexander Cockburn, who published a kind of anti-obit in the *Village Voice* a month after the Koestlers' deaths: "I called up my mother," wrote Cockburn, whose father, Claud Cockburn, a Communist, had been in Spain with Koestler during the Civil War, "to check whether she thought that Mrs. K. had somehow done the noble thing and was delighted to find her outraged. 'Claud always said what a bastard Koestler was,' she shouted down the international phone line indignantly, yet with the satisfaction of someone finding a point well proved at last."

Cockburn's insinuation lived on in gossipy ways, playing on the strong prejudices evoked by the suspicion of a powerful man's domination of a woman. It was easy to imagine some version of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" playing itself out on Montpelier Square, the "irrational" but stronger husband patronizing his younger wife into some ultimate act of self-effacement. George Mikes reported that Koestler had once or twice confided his anxiety that Cynthia was, in a way, "emotionally retarded"—unable to make friends on her own. Was Cynthia's death Koestler's fault? Soon the insinuation had become a conventional wisdom which troubled Koestler's closest friends, partly because of its logic, and partly because of the toll on his posthumous reputation.

Finally, Mikes decided to do a little investigating. On August 3, 1986, he wrote a short article in the London *Observer*, titled "Who Killed Cynthia Koestler?," in which he claimed to have uncovered important new evidence bearing on the case. He reported that he had talked to a physician who had been a friend of the Koestlers for many years. There was reason to believe, Mikes wrote, that Cynthia was herself suffering from cancer during the winter of 1983.

The inference to be drawn from this new evidence was that lingering suspicions about Koestler's "responsibility" for Cynthia's death should be put to rest. She, too, was dying. She had decided to end things for the

"As usual, Dominique, everything was absolutely business class."

GRANADA

Red earth and raw, the olive clumps olive and silver
in the thud of wind like a cape shaping the car,
the tormented olives smaller than you thought they were,
as a sadness, not incalculable but measured,
its distance diminishing in the humming coil of the road
widens astonishing Granada. This is how to read
Spain, backwards, like memory, like Arabic, mountains
and predicted cypresses, confirming that the only tense
is the past, where a sin lies that is all of Spain's.
It writhes in the olive's trunk, it gapes in the ochre
echo of a stone hillside, like a well's dry mouth; "Lorca."
The black olives of his eyes, the bread dipped in its saucer.
A man in a torn white shirt with its wine stains,
a black suit, and leather soles stumbling on the stones.
Try and stand outside, apart from it, and the other ones
on the open hill, the staccato of machine-gun fire,
of the dancer's heels, the "O" of the flamenco singer
and the mouth of the guitar, they were there in Goya,
the clown that dies eyes wide open in "The Third of May,"
where the heart of Spain is. Where Spain will always suffer.
Why do they come back from this distance, this far
from the cypresses, the mountains, the olives turning silver.

—Derek Walcott

same reasons Koestler had, and in the same spirit. Their joint suicide was a kind of final, merciful communion.

But if Mikes thought his article would rally Koestler's friends he was mistaken. Harold Harris understood that between the lines of this argument was an opening for even more serious assaults on Koestler's name, and he replied immediately ("For the Love of Arthur," *Observer*, August 10, 1986), refuting the new claim and the charge it seemed to dignify:

> The reason why [Mikes'] article was a disservice to Cynthia's memory, and even more to Arthur's, was the underlying assumption that, if she did not have a motive such as cancer, Arthur must have been responsible in some way for her decision. This unjust suspicion seems to persist, despite all the evidence to the contrary.

Harris had checked with Cynthia's personal physician, who said that Cynthia had not been ill. The pathologist who had conducted a careful postmortem had found no trace of cancer. But, more important, what can it mean to say that Koestler was somehow "responsible" for Cynthia's death? Harris was adamant that during the last days of Koestler's life, when Harris visited him, he had been "physically and mentally incapable of persuading her to take any course of action or of dissuading her from it." Cynthia must have come to her own conclusion that life without her husband would be literally unendurable. She had been a passionate gardener but gave up her garden when *he* was no longer capable of enjoying it. That said it all. "Seldom, if ever," Harris wrote, does one come across "a story of such utter devotion as Cynthia's for Arthur." She didn't need anyone to persuade her that her life was over if his was. "If he had tried to tell her otherwise she would for once have disobeyed him."

Harris might have added that Cynthia was herself keenly aware of her obsessive connection to her husband of nearly twenty years—was aware that she was bound up with him in something of a neurotic contract. In fact, the most vivid portrait we have of the marriage comes from her. Harris had been surprised to learn that she had begun a memoir of her life with Koestler. She had had the grace not to publish her version of their complex relationship while her husband was alive, but after the suicide Harris found the manuscript, and a year later published it in a single volume, along with some of Koestler's final autobiographical fragments. The book, which he entitled "Stranger on the Square," covers Cynthia's childhood and then the period from their first meeting in the late forties up to the mid-fifties. She writes in a curiously detached manner, like someone reporting on a career in middle management.

Cynthia Jefferies was twenty-two years old when she came to work as a stenographer at Verte Rive in 1949. Koestler was then living with Mamaine Paget, whom he had met five years earlier and whom he introduced to all as his wife; he was (secretly) about to receive papers formally dissolving his marriage, to Dorothy Ascher, an erstwhile comrade from whom he had parted amicably not long after being released from a Spanish prison. His turbulent affair with Daphne Hardy (the translator of "Darkness at Noon") had been breaking up just about the time Mamaine—beautiful, elegant, "an indubitably upper-class girl"—was introduced to him at a party of Cyril Connolly's.

Photographs of the time show Cynthia Jeffries to have been an attractive if not prepossessing young woman, with handsome, angular features. She had been raised in a prissy South African household, she writes, and had come to Paris to join her mother, from whom she says she felt deeply estranged, though she never explains why. Her father, his death, her age at the time of his death, her deep feelings for him—none of these things make it into the narrative, at least not directly. Harris notes in the book's epilogue that she was not told of her father's death until three days after it occurred, and that she did not find out for sure that he had ended his life himself, by slitting his wrists, until 1969. Nevertheless, Harris writes, she "might have been subconsciously aware of his suicide all her life."

Cynthia's recollections of childhood are rushed. She records that, from the start, she had been happiest when reading—that her "favourite people were the imaginary heroes of books rather than those living around me." Then she is twelve: there is a subtle elision in the narrative, a silent surrender to loss, perhaps, a sorrow contained and brought too hastily to closure. She shut herself in the bathroom with a pencil and note-book and started to write a historical romance whose hero was "a dashing Regency buck." The words did not come. At fifteen, she "was inspired to write a play," and even produced a draft. She tore it up. Sailing for Paris from Cape Town, just twenty, she reached the conclusion that the closest she would get to writing was working for a writer.

Cynthia began working for Koestler when he was at the height of his powers—"Darkness at Noon" behind him, the Congress for Cultural Freedom before him—and just in time for his wedding to Mamaine. Her first impression of Koestler was of "a tired-looking man with red rings under his eyes" and "no reassuring words." She began typing chapters of his new novel, "The Age of Longing." She remembers blushing when he called attention to her bashfulness. She fell instantly in love. "Every week I came out to Fontaine-le-Port from Paris and typed a new installment," she wrote in an essay about her husband's postwar career. "I could hardly wait for the next one. It reminded me of my childhood when every Thursday my father used to bring home my favourite comics—*Tiger Tim*, *Bubbles* and *Puck*."

What Cynthia could not have known at the time but might well have felt in a resonating way was that Koestler was also plagued by feelings of intense vulnerability. Mamaine's letters to her twin sister, Celia Goodman, often spoke of his insecurities and depressions, his eruptions of temper, his insomnia and fiendish nightmares, his drunkenness, and his frustration at being "unable to feel rapture." Some years before, in Paris, humiliated by Party hacks who had mocked his first efforts at fiction, he had attempted suicide. Now Koestler's attacks of "anxiety-neurosis" (as he called them) were harbingers of badgering and even brutality.

In September of 1949, just after Cynthia came along, Mamaine wrote Celia that she had allowed someone to drop by whom Koestler did not wish to see and "he went quite mad with fury and struck me a stunning blow on the head." Teddy Kollek, who was later the mayor of Jerusalem, visited the Koestlers during this period, and remembers the sounds of the couple quarrelling violently into the night. Cynthia was witness to many of these scenes as well, and they upset her. But there were also Koestler's indefatigable displays of wit, paternalism, and care, especially when Mamaine fell seriously ill. "The rows always seemed to be on trivial matters and my sympathies were always with Mamaine," Cynthia writes. "Paradoxical as it may seem, this in no way changed my feelings towards Arthur." Before long, Cynthia had given herself over to his career. She was swept up by his life and conversation—"a dream to me," she writes, "as if I were actually taking part in an exciting novel."

When Koestler and Mamaine bought an island retreat in the Delaware River in 1950, Cynthia followed them dutifully, exuberantly. Koestler was starting on his memoirs, and he would pace around dictating, and she would faithfully record every word:

> Sometimes I made a mistake in typing a letter. When this happened, an expression of irritation would flit across Arthur's face; he might even bring his fist down on the desk with a little rap. . . . He never dictated fast and sometimes there were long silences; but I could have sat there for ever. I tried to be like Arlova, Rubashov's secretary. When I read "Darkness at Noon" in the summer of 1949, I decided she was the kind of secretary Arthur wanted. She never spoke, never reacted in a distracting way; . . . I only wished that I was wearing an embroidered Russian blouse like hers.

KOESTLER and Mamaine, whose health was deteriorating, returned to Europe and were separated in August of 1951. (Mamaine had written her sister in March of that year, "God, how many more of these scenes will I have to go through, and how will the whole thing end? One thing K agreed about was that he couldn't live with any woman, however perfect, and he agreed with my analysis of his attitude as being a hostility to women derived from his hatred of his mother.") As the marriage fell apart, Mamaine could no longer put up with his rages. Cynthia understood and admired Mamaine's decision, but implies that this was not what she would have done: "I wondered how Mamaine could bear the thought of a day passing without knowing what Arthur's opinions were on this or that topic. I was so deeply dependent on him myself—what he thought of a book, a film, a new sensation—and his reactions always surprised and impressed me."

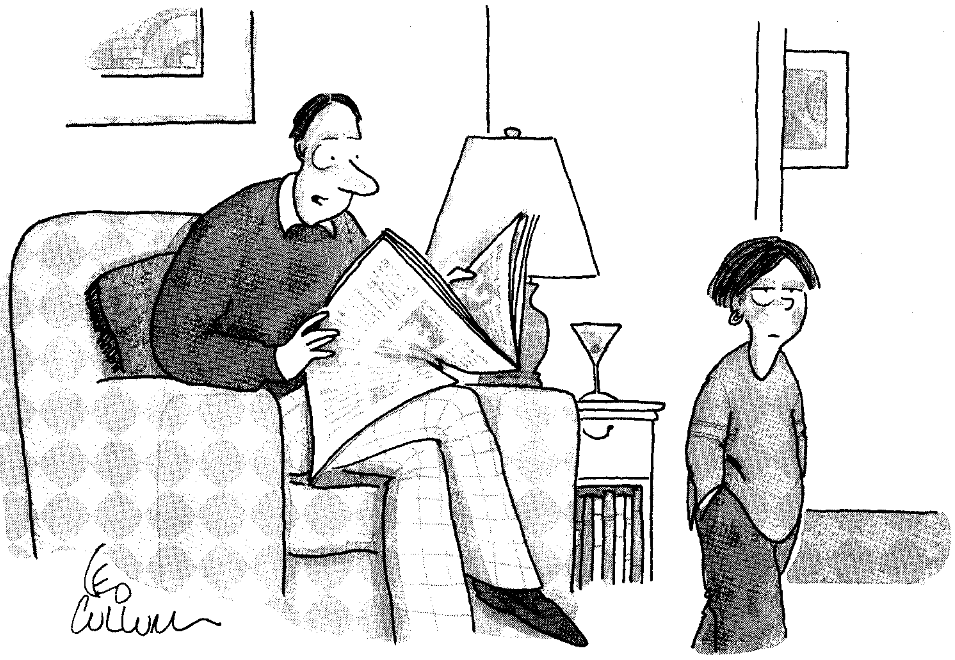
It is not clear from "Stranger on the Square" whether or not Cynthia had become Koestler's lover by then—she is curiously elusive on this point, though she volunteers how much she envied his mistresses, and speaks of continuing loyalty toward Mamaine. In any case, though his affection for and sense of dependency on Cynthia were growing, his feelings for her did not go very deep. No woman (he conceded in "Arrow in the Blue") ever satisfied him for long. "The phantom that I was after," he writes, "is as old as man: victory over loneliness through the perfect physical and spiritual union." And he quotes Goethe's Mephisto: "every wench is Helena to you." A woman starts out as Helena, but she becomes contemptible by becoming available.

In 1952, Koestler grew anxious about Cynthia's dedication and began to signal a breaking off of their relations. She knew the end was near and retreated. She considered suicide, but the impulse passed. Curiously, the fantasy of her death consoled her. ("Buoyed up by thoughts of suicide, I continued to live what I believed to be a temporary existence.")

For the first time now, Cynthia implies that she has a lover, an unnamed man who "swept all thoughts of suicide from my mind"; she determines to get on with a life "of my own"; Koestler (who is now consulting a psychiatrist) has "opened my eyes before it was too late." The affair is soon over. Then, suddenly, she is married. "A friend with whom I frequently corresponded returned to England on holiday. He worked for a publishing company in America. We got married before he returned to New York." That is all Cynthia has to say about the courtship. She followed him to New York, and the marriage failed after a few months.

Unexpectedly, in June, 1954, Mamaine died of acute asthma. Koestler, who had remained her close friend, was devastated. Much later, in a passage that appears in "Stranger on the Square," Koestler confessed that his petty furies had forced Mamaine to leave him; that he had not realized how illness undermines one—something he could appreciate in old age—and how she required his indulgences. The summer after Mamaine's death (while he was contemplating an engagement to another woman, a relationship that ultimately failed), he wrote in a journal, "I can neither live alone, nor with somebody. It is true, I always picked one type: beautiful Cinderellas, infantile & inhibited, prone to be subdued by bullying. But this realisation doesn't solve the problem."

CYNTHIA turned up in London in July of 1955. She did not need much persuading when Koestler asked her to type his book "Reflections on Hanging." She then returned to New York, and, in November of that year, Koestler became bogged down in his biography of Johannes Kepler, which eventually grew into "The Sleepwalkers." Impulsively, frantically, he cabled Cynthia to come back. She rushed to London, and never left him. After 1955, Cynthia was Koestler's only steady companion, cooking his meals and putting up with his complaints about them, sharing his bed and refraining from asking who else was doing so. Koestler, Cynthia recalled, had some years before precipitated an irreparable quarrel with a new fiancée, accusing her of carrying on private conversations at his dinner parties, which he liked to conduct like seminars. Cynthia would not make this mistake.



"Is everything all right, Jeffrey? You never call me 'dude' anymore."

He bought her a mews house near his own house, and told her (in George Mikes' presence) that he loved her but was "too neurotic" ever to be married. Then he had a change of heart, prompted by attitudes that now seem quaint. In January of 1965, Koestler was a visiting scholar at Stanford. "Those puritanic Americans could not possibly allow that two people should live in sin on the campus," Mikes writes, and Koestler and Cynthia married. They returned to London later that year and settled into a comparatively quiet life in Knightsbridge: writing during the day, perhaps a game of Scrabble with Mikes and his companion in the evening.

"She was intelligent, openhearted, kind, very pretty, and completely lacked malice," Mikes recalled after the Koestlers' deaths. "She did not talk about herself because she regarded the subject as unimportant and uninteresting." The one serious illness she had, in 1979, was an attack of appendicitis. Two days later she was taking Koestler's dictation from her hospital bed. Arthur called her Angel—"even," Harris writes sardonically in his introduction to "Stranger on the Square," "if he was accusing her of some supposed heinous crime."

Cynthia grew outwardly more confident as the years went by, and Koestler grew more seasoned. She "teased Arthur—gently and lovingly," Mikes writes, "in a way she would not have dared a few years before. If she made a complete mess of a dish and Arthur grumbled—less offensively than in early days—Cynthia apologised in vague terms, but, quite obviously, was not much concerned. There was a shrug of the shoulder in her voice." After Koestler became gravely ill, it was Cynthia who came into her own, at least in the context of their domestic life. He became pretty much dependent on her—became, in a way, Mikes writes, Cynthia's "prisoner."

Yet Cynthia had obviously never made much headway against the complex of terrors her husband's power personified, and a certain discreet resentfulness shapes many of her later anecdotes in "Stranger on the Square." When she dozed off, and he reprimanded her coldly, she was "black with guilt." Koestler had nightmares: "I wished Arthur were not so infectious. He also infected me with his moods—his depressions and melancholias." Or this, about a trip to France: "I had never traveled with Arthur before and was wildly excited at the prospect of being with him day and night for three weeks—though also daunted. The thought of having to speak French in front of him was agony."

There is one particularly moving expression of her enigmatic attachment to Koestler, which had surprised even Harris. Cynthia records matter-of-factly that she had become pregnant twice during the early years. Each time, she complied with Koestler's demand that she get an abortion. He would be a terrible father, he said—"too neurotic." As a matter of fact, Koestler had fathered a child out of wedlock, a daughter, a couple of years before he and Cynthia had begun to keep house together. He had asked Cynthia to stay with him for moral support on the day the mother—a married woman who lived in France, and whose husband adopted the child—came to see him. Koestler had even confided, looking at snapshots of the plump child, that he feared he was giving up his "last chance." Nevertheless, Cynthia writes, Koestler referred to her first pregnancy in his diary as her "food poisoning." The euphemism did not seem to protect her as well as it did him:

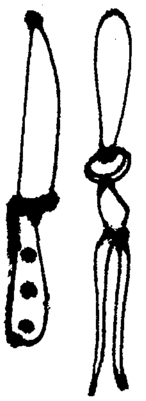
> On the first floor [of a strange house] an operating table had been set up, upon which I lay, embarrassed by the false bonhomie of the Mayfair doctor and nurse. They disappeared briefly and came back transformed in sinister black gowns of rubber which made a rustling sound. Held down by the nurse, I tried not to struggle as the doctor wielded his scalpel. . . .
>
> I was soon in a taxi bound for Montpelier Square, melodramatically haunted by the scene in *Arrow in the Blue* of [Koestler's] childhood tonsillectomy.

One wonders who first thought to characterize her revulsion as "melodramatic." Anyway, this experience remained "a nightmare in slow motion," which would be replayed in Cynthia's mind many times.

After the Koestlers were found dead, it was discovered that on the morning of March 1st, Cynthia had brought their lapdog, David, to the vet to be put down. One can only imagine the agony out of which she acted. Mikes writes that "Cynthia projected her own feelings onto the dog. She was convinced that David—had he been able to choose—would not want to survive in new surroundings, among strangers. . . ."

In his introduction to "Stranger on the Square," Harris writes that Koestler

> never made any secret of the fact that he was difficult to live with. . . . He never tried to hide his demanding nature, the violence of his moods, his abrupt changes of direction, his obsessional chasing of women. . . . Behind all that was a man of intense intellect, a man who could show enormous kindness and generosity, a man of incomparable humour, and—most of the time—a companion of the utmost charm.
>
> Cynthia was well aware of his faults which he did not try to conceal. Yet, in all the thirty-three years of their association, the only times that she was really unhappy were during the first six years, when, occasionally, Arthur tried to break the links which bound them together. . . . It is hardly an exaggeration to say that his life became hers, that she *lived* his life. And when the time came for him to leave it, her life too was at an end.



EERILY enough, Koestler had prophesied Cynthia's anguish before he ever met her. In "Insight and Outlook," where he deals with the psychology of crying, he considers the grief of an inconsolable widow. If she (the hypothetical widow) cannot be comforted, he writes in his most clinical-sounding voice, it is because she cannot imagine how a great many of the satisfactions she had got from her husband are in fact "replaceable"; indeed, she cannot imagine the fullness of self-possession. The loss is "irreplaceable [only] with regard to those relations in which the independence of the self was given up." But had Koestler ever explored the psychology of a man who would exact or even accept such a tribute?

Actually, he did—as a writer this is mostly what he did, although this point has been lost both in the gossip about Koestler and in Harris's public effort to defuse it. Harris's sympathetic description of the Koestlers' marriage is intended to thwart allegations that Arthur talked Cynthia into suicide and that his "eccentricity" caused her untimely death. Harris is defending his friend. But he was also the literary executor (he died over three years ago), and his words—particularly the vexing phrase "utter devotion" to describe Cynthia's feelings for her husband—obscure something that is integral to Koestler's work and that legitimatizes readers' fascination with his marriage and death. From 1937 to 1978, Arthur Koestler wrote some thirty books. Most were about politics and science. All were about the dangers of devotion. No other writer in our time described more touchingly the understandable human impulse to surrender oneself out of loyalty to others, and no writer worked so doggedly to establish a difference between what is understandable and what is right.

The real threat in "Darkness at Noon," after all, is in the link between moral authority and psychic dependency. We meet Nicolas Salmanovich Rubashov—the exhausted, denounced Commissar, rotting in prison—growing coldly conscious of that threat. He ruminates, tormented, on the morality of his actions on behalf of the Party: Hadn't its leaders simply done what was necessary? Hadn't he justifiably served them, killing only when necessary? Rubashov had hoped to find ethical ground, and meaning for his lonely life, in devotion to Party theoreticians. Numbed by interrogation, he never quite comes up with the arguments against this devotion, though he manages to assert near the end (not quite cogently, alas) that Raskolnikov, the hero of "Crime and Punishment," finds out how "twice two are not four when mathematical units are human beings."

What truly haunts Rubashov is the memory of his secretary, Arlova, the woman who had adored him, served him, and then sacrificed her life to his political rehabilitation (the character a young Cynthia had wished so much to be like). He cannot stop visualizing the curve of her breast. Their lovemaking had put him, if only momentarily, in a space where he had become "absolute"—where action had meaning that could not be justified by a calculation of political consequences. She was arrested for participating in one of his intrigues. He did not come to her defense. She was tried; at last she was executed. (" 'You will always be able to do what you like with me,' she had told him—and he did!")

Imagine, then, how Rubashov would have come to scrutinize a marriage in which a wife cannot live without her husband: What, as he awaited the Stalinist executioner, would he have thought about people who spoke of her utter devotion? If the husband *were* the wife's sole reason for being (one can just hear Rubashov growling), had they colluded in some compulsive—no, immoral—way? Had he, perhaps, exploited her weakness for servility from the start, the way the Party had exploited his own? For her part, had she not exploited his corresponding weakness for control?

THE point is that Koestler began early on in his literary career to seek a way to enshrine the principle that human life is not to be trifled with, that no human life is a means to any other end, that we cannot be relied on to do what is right if all we have to work with is our pain or history or interest. This is precisely the point he was pressing in his later work: that the social-scientific quest for certainty, so characteristic of nineteenth-century positivism, is pretentious, that it became murderous in twentieth-century politics. We moderns, who have lost "contact" with "a religion whose content is perennial but not archaic," are inclined toward secular religions instead. Modern writers must try to establish limits on the moral prestige of science or we shall all become suckers for leaders who claim to govern by its laws.

It is not at all clear that his fascination with "the supernatural" really helped Koestler discredit the old materialism, but it is also not clear that he should be ridiculed for this, or thought an impresario of suicide for his stubbornness. In 1990, the *Times Literary Supplement* published a review by Martin Gardner assailing "parapsychology," in which he noted in an aside that "a terminally ill Arthur Koestler persuaded his healthy and younger wife to join him in a suicide pact"—as if the case were closed and its relevance to Koestler's work self-evident.

Actually, Koestler's late books on evolution and "parapsychology" do not so much advocate Lamarckism and ESP as appeal for less smugness from their detractors. The alter-ego protagonist of Koestler's last novel, "The Call-Girls," himself supposes that some of the notions suggested by parapsychology make "one's hair stand on end." The point is, "they sound a little less preposterous in the light of the equally wild concepts of sub-atomic physics," the notion that an electron can be in two places at once, that it can race backward in time, that space has holes in it. "God is dead," he concludes, "but materialism is also dead, since matter has become a meaningless word."

While wanting us to reject material certainty, Koestler wanted us to embrace the "absolute"—a feat that is not (as Kant taught) as paradoxical as it sounds. In "The Lotus and the Robot," which he published in 1960, Koestler is on his first visit to Japan. He writes that he came up against a leading professor of comparative religion, an expert on Buddhism. The first question Koestler reports putting to the professor was this: Is it "possible to have a system of ethics divorced from any transcendental belief?" Somewhat taken aback, his Japanese host denied that the word "transcendental" had any meaning for him. Then why, someone else followed up, do we tell the truth when it is in our interest to lie, why do we not murder the socially inconvenient types, what is evil, why be tolerant?

These were not exactly original questions. They were also not exactly bad ones. But at the heart of Koestler's work were just such rudimentary questions, *the* Koestlerian questions: How can human life be thought absolute, sacred, in a world of evolutionary accidents?

It is very hard, though not impossible, perhaps, to reconcile Koestler's notion of the absolute with Cynthia's suicide. It *is* impossible to square this with her devotion, as described by Harold Harris. This is not a private matter. It goes to the heart of what writers like Koestler aspire to be and why they should be remembered. Imagine if Dickens had been discovered beating his children for taking a second helping, or if Orwell had tried to suppress unfavorable reviews of "Animal Farm." Imagine if friends had rushed to defend them with intimate details of children's hectoring or critics' stupidity. Would we not be missing something if we failed to explore the contradiction? Would not Koestler himself have appreciated the irony?

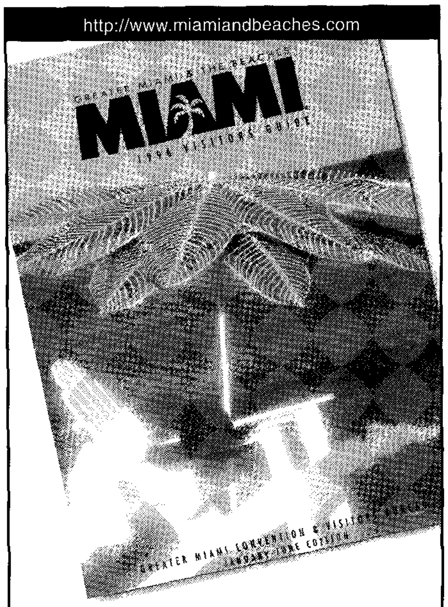
I am not suggesting that the lives of writers should be held to the standards they create for their heroes. Of course moral writers soothe themselves with their stacks of pages; of course their fictions and essays often promise a triumph against the very weaknesses they imagine themselves succumbing to. A hallmark of Koestler's own nonfiction was to expose such compensating inconsistency in writers' (and scientists', and revolutionists') lives, including his own. It is not his apparent hypocrisy that is worth our time, it is his apparent tragedy. Rubashov dies without ever working out how, as he put it, the "idea of man" is to be valued over the "idea of mankind." Koestler claimed no such doubts. The remainder of Koestler's working life may be seen as dedicated to supplying Rubashov rejoinders he did not have the wit to write for him in "Darkness at Noon." That was a noble desire. The question is, were they any good?

Is it not obvious, in this context, that Koestler's peculiar version of the "absolute" proved too sublime to be of use to him, or to Cynthia, not only at the end, but during their many years together? Why, therefore, was Koestler so relentlessly drawn to it, and is there a connection to his (often strange, "supernatural") version of transcendental belief? At times, Koestler speaks of this as if it were hovering in space above the messes of the world; as if he could yank it into the everyday, like an evangelical preacher yanking in Christ—a first principle to save us from ourselves, we who (like him, presumably) are searching in panic for "rapture," wanting a "victory" over loneliness. Then again, is a man who was admittedly "too neurotic" to be a father our best authority on the subject of the transcendental in the first place?

To pose such questions, even if they do not vindicate Koestler, at least keeps open the debate he truly relished, which is how we are to "justify our existence," as Simone de Beauvoir (another of his Helenas) put it. Why do we love? And who if not Koestler would be pleased to leave us wondering if any writer can be trusted? ♦

TODAY'S HISTORY: On this day in 1840, Prince Albert married Queen Elizabeth I in England.—*Cumberland (Md.) Times-News.*

We are not amused.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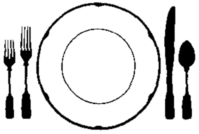
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LETTER FROM SKYWALKER RANCH

WHY IS THE FORCE STILL WITH US?

The Star Wars trilogy touched audiences around the world in ways that no other movies ever have. It also ushered in the soulless action flick and the kind of merchandising that brings us R2-D2 beverage coolers. George Lucas discusses the making of an American myth.

BY JOHN SEABROOK

I—THE SUMMIT

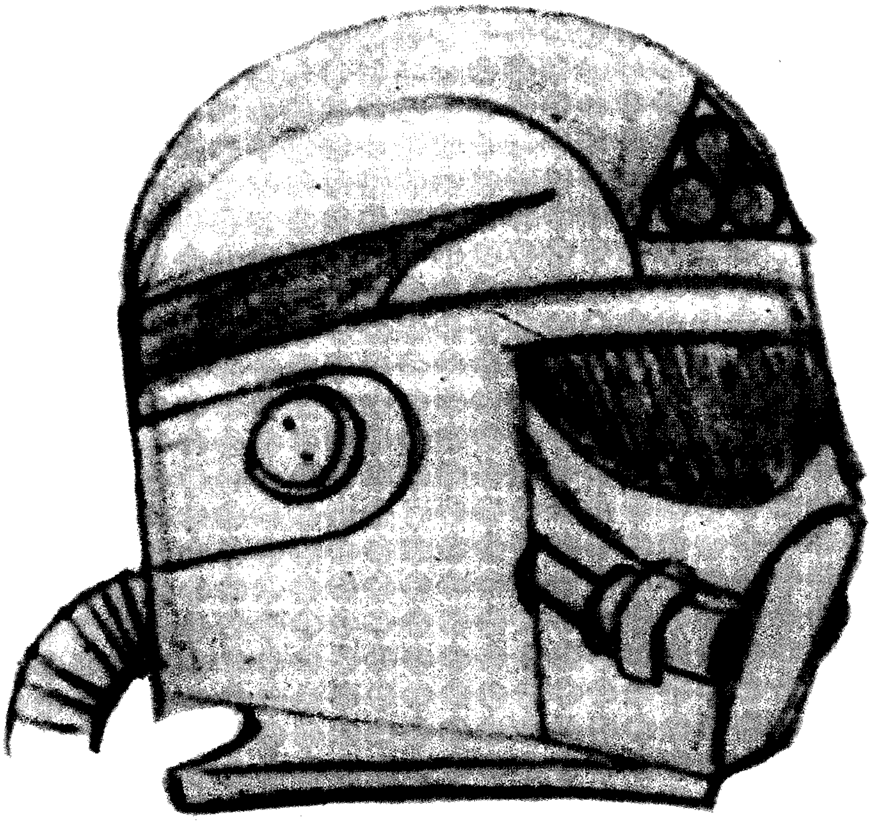
THE biannual Star Wars Summit Meeting is an opportunity for the licensees who make Darth Vader masks and thirty-six-inch sculpted Yoda collectibles to trade strategy and say "May the Force be with you" to the retailers from F.A.O. Schwarz and Target who sell the stuff, and for everyone in the far-flung Star Wars universe to get a better sense of "how deeply the brand has penetrated into the culture," in the words of one licensee. Almost six hundred people showed up at this year's summit, which took place in early November in the Marin County Civic Center, in San Rafael, California; Star Warsians came from as far away as Australia and Japan. Those arriving by car were ushered to parking places by attendants waving glowing and buzzing Luke Skywalker lightsabres, which were one of the cooler pieces of new product seen at the summit this year; other arrivals, who were staying in the Embassy Suites next door, strolled across the parking lot in the early-morning sunshine of another beautiful day in Northern California.

It was interesting to stand by the door of the auditorium and reflect that all these people, representing billions of dollars of wealth, depended for their existence on an idea that seemed utterly *un*commercial at the time George Lucas began trying to sell it to studios, in the mid-seventies, when his thirteen-page treatment of "The Star Wars" (as it was then called) was rejected by Universal and by United Artists; only Alan Ladd, who was then at Fox, would gamble on it, over the heated objections of the Fox board. When Lucas would get down on the carpet with his toy airplanes and his talk of the Empire and the dark and light sides of the Force and the anthropology of Wookiees, even Lucas's friends thought, "George has lost it," according to the screenwriter Gloria Katz. "He always had this tunnel vision when it came to his projects, but it seemed like this time he was really out there. 'What's this thing called a Wookiee? What's a Jedi, George? You want to make a space opera?' "

The first movie went on to earn three hundred and twenty-three million dollars (more than any previous film had ever earned), and so far the trilogy has brought in about a billion three hundred million dollars in worldwide box-office sales and more than three billion more in licensing fees. Before "Star Wars," merchandise was used only to promote movies; it had no value apart from the films. But Star Wars merchandise became a business unto itself, and it inaugurated modern merchandising as we know it—the Warner Bros. Store, Power Rangers, the seventeen *thousand* different "101 Dalmatians" products that Disney has licensed so far—although Star Wars remains "the holy grail of licensing," in the words of one analyst. Last year, Star Wars action figures were the best-selling toy for boys and the second over-all best-seller, after Barbie. A large percentage of Star Wars action figures are actually bought by adults—Star Wars merchandise dealers—who are hoarding them, to speculate on the price. As a result, it has been difficult to find Star Wars toys, and some stores have limited the number of action figures that one person can buy. (The "vinyl-caped Jawa" action figures, which sold for around three dollars in 1978, are now worth about fourteen hundred.) In addition, LucasArts, which makes Star Wars CD-ROMs, is among the top five producers of video games for computers, while Star Wars novels are, book for book, the single most valuable active franchise in publishing. (Most of the twenty-odd novels Bantam has published since 1991 have made the *Times* hardcover- or paperback-best-seller list.) All this in spite of the fact that there has been no new Star Wars movie in theatres since "The Return of the Jedi," in 1983—although that is about to change.

What *is* it that makes people crave the Star Wars brand in so many different flavors? Somewhere between the idea and the stuff, it seemed to me—between the image of Luke gazing at the two setting suns on the planet Tatooine while he contemplated his destiny as a fighter pilot for the Rebel Alliance, and the twelve-inch Luke collectibles sold by Kenner—an alchemic transformation was taking place: dreams were being spun into desire, and desire forged into product. Here at the summit, you could feel this process drawing energy from the twin rivers of marketing and branding on the one hand, and from people's need to make sense of things on the other. In a world where the stories and images and lessons provided by electronic media seem to be replacing the stories and images and lessons people used to get from religion, literature, and painting, the lessons of Star Wars—that good is stronger than evil, that human values can triumph over superior technology, that even the lowliest of us can be redeemed, and that all this is relatively free of moral ambiguity—is a very powerful force indeed.

AS an alien at the summit, I wasn't invited inside the auditorium, but several participants debriefed me on the goings on. In the morning, Howard Roffman, the vice-president of Lucasfilm Licensing, talked about the coming "Star Wars Trilogy Special Edition," a digitally enhanced version of the original trilogy. The first movie will appear on nearly two thousand screens starting January 31st, followed three weeks later by "The Empire Strikes Back" and two weeks after that by "The Return of the Jedi." Then, in 1999, the first of three *new* Star Wars films will début, with the second tentatively scheduled to follow in 2001 and the third in 2003. Yes, it is true, Roffman told the audience, that the first of the new "prequel" movies, which, as everyone present already knew, will begin to tell the back story to the original trilogy—what happened *before* Luke's adventures—will be directed by George Lucas himself, who, as everyone also knew, has not directed a film since the first Star Wars movie.



The first movie in the new "prequel" will be directed by Lucas himself, who has famously not directed a film since "Star Wars."

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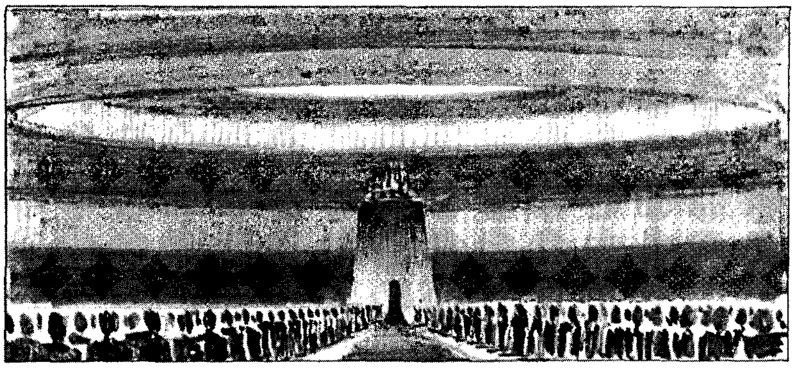
Roffman warned the licensees not to flood the market with Star Wars merchandise this winter—maybe because he was concerned about damaging the prequel's allure. He admitted that no one knew how well the "Special Edition" would do, because nobody has ever given a trilogy of movies already seen on television and video such a wide theatrical rerelease. Still, he believed that a lot of people would go to see "Star Wars" again, because seeing it for the first time had been such an important event. " 'Star Wars' has a timeless quality," Roffman had told me earlier. "For a lot of people, it was a defining moment in their lives. There is a whole generation that remembers where they were when they first saw 'Star Wars.' Now that original generation has aged, and they'll be looking at the films through different eyes—plus they'll want to take their kids." A movie that was designed to appeal to a feeling like nostalgia in the first place would be revisited by people seeking to feel nostalgic for *that* experience, in the pursuit of an ever-receding vision of a mythic past.

Roffman told the crowd that he still got chills when he saw the opening shot of the rebel Blockade Runner pursued by the Imperial Star Destroyer. Tom Sherak, a Fox executive vice-president, who followed Roffman to the podium, joked that he got chills a little earlier in the film, when he saw the Fox logo come up on the screen. When Lucas approached Fox with the idea of rereleasing the Star Wars trilogy, Sherak told me, it was "like Christmas." Fox readily agreed to Lucas's proposal that the studio pay for the use of digital technology to fix some things about the original movies that had always bothered him. Along with every other studio, Fox is hoping to win the rights to distribute the three Star Wars prequel movies, and was willing to do almost anything to make George happy. The studio eventually spent fifteen million dollars on the digital enhancements, and will spend perhaps another twenty million marketing the "Special Edition," which is expected to make around a hundred million.

Then John Talbot, the director of marketing for Pepsi-Cola, showed off sketches for its R2-D2 coolers, which will have Star Wars-related Pepsi cans inside their heads and will probably be displayed in convenience stores. He talked about all the different ways the company would promote the "Special Edition": not only through the Pepsi label but through Frito-Lay, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell as well—all part of an unprecedented two-billion-dollar commitment from Pepsi which will help drive the Star Wars brand even deeper into the culture, and insure that even if the story were to fade from the surface of the Earth it will remain buried underground in the form of Luke Skywalker pizza boxes and Obi-Wan sixteen-ounce beverage cups.

At five o'clock, a squadron of Imperial Guards, accompanied by white-shelled Imperial Storm Troopers, took the stage, followed by Darth Vader himself, sporting a costume from Lucasfilm Archives. (F. A. O. Schwarz and Neiman Marcus are actually selling limited-edition full-size Vader mannequins for five thousand dollars each—a Star Wars product that comes close to having the quasi-religious status of a "prop.") Speaking a recorded version of what sounded like James Earl Jones's voice, the Dark Lord of the Sith sternly upbraided the audience for not inviting him to the summit, but then said that it was actually a good thing he hadn't been invited, because he'd been able to spend the day at "the Ranch" with someone far more important than "you mere merchandisers." With that, George Lucas strode onto the stage.

Wherever Lucas appears, he receives a standing ovation, and he got two today—one on taking the stage and the other on leaving it. It isn't simply Lucas's success as a filmmaker that people are applauding—the fact that, having begun his career right here at the Marin County Civic Center (he had used it as



Lucas is the sole owner of his companies, which the president of Lucasfilm estimated would be valued by Wall Street at five billion dollars.

RALPH MCQUARRIE

a location for his first film, the dark, dystopian "THX 1138"), Lucas had gone on to create in Star Wars and Indiana Jones two of the most valuable movie properties ever, and, with John Milius, had also had the idea for "Apocalypse Now," which Francis Ford Coppola ended up making. Nor is it his success as a businessman: Industrial Light & Magic, which started as essentially Lucas's model shop—a place to do the effects for the original "Star Wars"—has grown into the premier digital-imaging studio in the world, and is responsible for most of the milestones in computer graphics, including the cyborg in "Terminator 2," the dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park," and the Kennedy cameo in "Forrest Gump." No, you applaud for Lucas because he *is* Star Wars. It's difficult for brains braised in Star Wars from early adulthood to conceive of Lucas in any other terms. The purpose of a myth, after all, is to give people a structure for making sense of the world, and it happens that Lucas's heroic myths are an almost irresistible way of making sense of *him*. "It's like George is Yoda," Tom Sherak told me. "He doesn't say a lot of words, but as you're listening the passion this man feels comes through. He's talking about his own creation. It's this whole thing that just comes over you."

Earlier, during a break, marketing reps from Hasbro had given all the members of the audience their own Luke Skywalker lightsabres, and at Lucas's appearance people turned them on and waved them around. ("It was like being at a Jethro Tull concert in 1978," according to one participant.) After they'd finished, Lucas said a few words about his reasons for wanting to re-release the trilogy, which were chiefly that it would allow a new generation of fans to see the movies in theatres. He later told me he had made a point of keeping his own son, who is now four, from watching "Star Wars" on video, so he could show it to him in a theatre first.

Lucas's aura may be almost palpable, but his *prana*—the Sanskrit word for life force—is oddly blurry behind the looming shadow of his myth. (Of course, his lack of presence is also part of the myth: it's what makes him Yoda-like.) He is slight, and has a small, round belly, a short beard, black nerd-style glasses, and a vulnerable-sounding voice. According to the summiteers I talked to, the only really memorable moment in his ten minutes on the stage came when Alan Hassenfeld, the head of Hasbro, gave him a twelve-inch sculpted Obi-Wan Kenobi body with a George Lucas head, and the crowd went wild. A George Lucas toy! As one member of the audience said later, "What a collectible that would make!" George held up his George toy, and the people all cheered and waved their lightsabres.

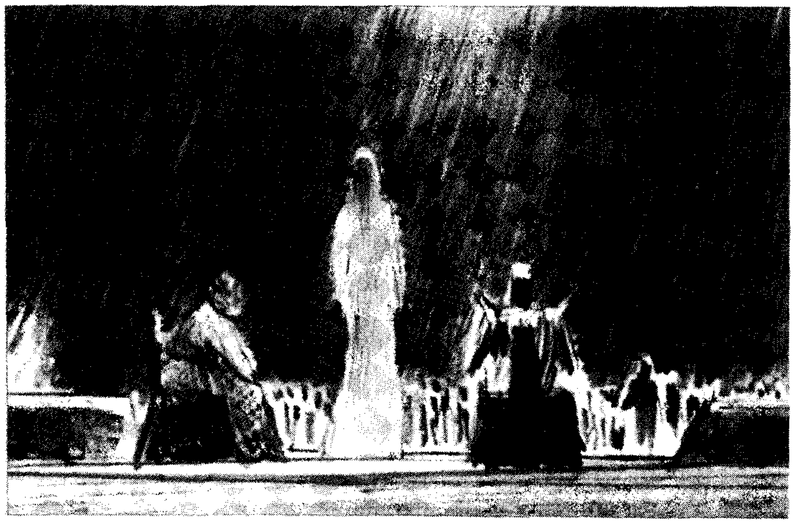
II—THE RANCH

SKYWALKER RANCH, the headquarters of Lucas's enterprises, is that part of the Star Wars universe which juts up above the top layer of the myth, into the real world. Deep in the hills of West Marin, the Ranch is a three-thousand-acre detailed evocation of a nineteenth-century ranch that never was. When Lucas was beginning to conceive the place, in the early eighties, he wrote a short story about an imaginary nineteenth-century railroad tycoon who retired up here and built the homestead of his dreams. In this story, the tycoon's Victorian main house dates from 1869; a craftsman-style library was added in 1910; the stable was built in 1870 and the brook house in 1913. Lucas gave his story to the architects of the Ranch and told them to build it accordingly. (He calls this style "remodel" architecture.)

Here, just as in "Star Wars," Lucas created a new world and then layered it with successive coats of mythic anthropology to make it feel used. He has made the future feel like the past, which is what George Lucas does best. "Star Wars" takes place in a futuristic, sci-fi world, but Lucas tells you at the beginning that it existed "a long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away." The movie has all the really cool parts of the future (interplanetary travel, flashy effects, excellent machines), but it also has the friendships, the heroism, and other reassuring conventions of the cinema-processed past (outlaw saloons, dashing flyboys, sinister nobles, brave knights, and narrow escapes). It makes you feel a longing for the unnameable thing that is always being lost (a feeling similar to the one you get from Lucas's second film, "American Graffiti," which helped make nostalgia big business), but it's a longing sweetened by the promise that in the future we'll figure out some way of getting that unnameable thing back. This was the deliciously sad desire that was being forged into product at the summit down in San Rafael, but up here at Lucas's domain the desire seemed to exist in a purer form.

To get to the Ranch, you head west from San Rafael on Lucas Valley Road, which was named long ago, for a different, unrelated Lucas. It's just a coincidence, but as you wind through the plump, grassy hills of Marin County—America's Tuscany—you feel as though you were entering a sort of Jurassic Park of entrepreneurial dreams, in which there are no coincidences, only destiny. A few yards beyond the automatic wooden gates, you come to a kiosk with a guard whose arm patch says "Skywalker Fire Brigade," and then you drive past Skywalker Inn, where each of the guest rooms—the John Ford room, the Akira Kurosawa room—is decorated in the style of the eponymous director. (Tim Burton was staying in one of them at the time of my visit, mixing sound for "Mars Attacks!")

As in "Star Wars," so at the Ranch, you get the sense that some all-controlling intelligence has rubbed itself over every element for a long time. The Technical Building, which is filled with the latest in sound-engineering and editing technology, including a full THX theatre and a soundstage that can seat a hundred-piece orchestra, looks precisely like a nineteenth-century California winery. (According to Lucas's story, it was originally built in 1880, and the interior was remodelled in the Art Deco style in 1934.) Trellises of Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, and Merlot grapes are growing outside, and the grapes are shipped to Francis Coppola's real winery in Napa Valley. Then there are the stables and a baseball field and people on bicycles with Skywalker license plates and an old hayrack and mower that look as if they'd been sitting beside the road for a hundred years. Lucas designed the place so that you can see only one building at a time from any spot on the property, and although two hundred people come to the Ranch each day, you see no cars—only bicycles, except for the occasional Skywalker Fire Brigade vehicle. The Ranch has three underground parking garages, which can accommodate two hundred cars.



I.L.M. has become the premier digital-imaging studio in the world—responsible for the cyborg in "T2," the dinosaurs in "Jurassic Park," and the Kennedy cameo in "Forrest Gump."

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Some of Lucas's friends told me that they thought the Ranch was George's attempt to recapture not only America's legendary Western past but his own past, especially his golden days at U.S.C. film school, in the sixties, when he was a protégé of Coppola's (they met when he was a student observer on Coppola's film "Finian's Rainbow"). He soon became friendly with Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, and Brian De Palma. They were all young artists, who just wanted to make artistically worthy films and weren't yet worried about topping one another's blockbusters. ("E.T." and "Jurassic Park" both surpassed the "Star Wars" box-office record; Lucas is hoping to take the record back from Spielberg with the prequel.) But not many filmmakers come up to the Ranch to conceive and write films; they come to use the technology in postproduction. As Spielberg once wrote, "George Lucas has the best toys of anybody I have ever known, which is why it's so much fun playing over at George's house."

From the outside, the main house looks like the big house on the Ponderosa, but the inside is more like the Huntington Gallery in San Marino, which used to be the home of the nineteenth-century railroad magnate Henry Huntington. Covering the walls is first-growth redwood that was salvaged from old bridges near Newport Beach and has been milled into panelling, and hanging on the redwood are selections from Lucas's collection of paintings by Norman Rockwell, another unironic American image-maker, with whom Lucas feels an affinity. To the Lucas fan, the most exciting things in the house are to be found in the two glass cases in the front hall, where the holiest relics are stored. The "real" lightsabre that Luke uses in "Star Wars" is here, and so are Indy's bullwhip and the diary that leads Indy to the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail itself is stored in the Archives Building.

Two days a week, Lucas comes to the Ranch to conduct business, usually driving himself along Lucas Valley Road. He spends most of the rest of his time at home, writing and looking after his three kids. The oldest, a teen-age girl, he adopted with his ex-wife and collaborator Marcia Lucas (she won an Oscar for editing "Star Wars"); the younger ones—a girl and a boy—he adopted as a single parent, after he and Marcia split up. Because my first visit to the Ranch fell on a Wednesday, which is not one of Lucas's regular days, I had been told there would be no meeting with him. But as we were touring the two-story circular redwood library with the stained-glass roof (there was a cat on the windowsill, a fire burning in the fireplace, and a Maxfield Parrish painting hanging over the mantel), word came that Lucas was here today after all, and would see me now. I was led down the back stairway into the dim recesses of the basement, which was sort of like going backstage at a high-tech theatre, and into a small, windowless room filled with editing machines, lit chiefly by light coming from two screens—a television and a glowing PowerBook. There sat the great mythmaker himself, wearing his usual flannel shirt, jeans, sneakers, and Swatch watch. He emerged from a dark corner of the couch to shake hands, then retreated into the dimness again.

LUCAS conceived the Ranch as a complete filmmaking operation—his version of the ideal studio, one that would respect human values and creativity, as opposed to Hollywood studios, which he saw as evil and greedy and encouraging of mediocrity. Lucas's famous disdain of Hollywood is partly a result of his father's influence—George Lucas, Sr., was a conservative small-town businessman, who viewed all lawyers and film executives as sharpies and referred to Hollywood as Sin City—and partly a result of his own bitter experience with his first two films, "THX 1138" and "American Graffiti." The dark lords at Universal thought "Graffiti" was so bad that they weren't going to release the film at all, and then they were going to release it just on TV; finally, when Coppola, who had just made "The Godfather," offered to buy the movie, Universal relented and brought it out in the theatres, although not before Ned Tanen, then the head of Universal, cut four and a half minutes from it—a move that caused Lucas terrific anguish. Made for seven hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, "Graffiti" went on to earn nearly a hundred and twenty million.

"I've always had a basic dislike of authority figures, a fear and resentment of grown-ups," Lucas says in "Skywalking," the 1983 biography by Dale Pollock (to whom I'm indebted for some of the details of Lucas's early career). When the success of the first Star Wars film allowed Lucas to "control the means of production," as he likes to say, he financed the second and third films himself, and he built the Ranch. In the beginning, the films edited at the Ranch were Lucas's own: he was busy working on the Star Wars movies and overseeing the Indiana Jones series (which he conceived the story for and produced; Spielberg directed). But before long people at the Ranch were spending less time on Lucas's films—"Willow," "Radioland Murders," and the "Young Indiana Jones Chronicles" television series have been his main projects in the last few years—and more time doing other people's. Today, Lucas offers a full-service digital studio, where directors can write, edit, and mix films, and Industrial Light & Magic, down in San Rafael, can do the special effects.

Lucas is the sole owner of his companies; Gordon Radley, the president of Lucasfilm, estimated in *Forbes* that Wall Street would value them at five billion dollars. (*Forbes* estimated that Lucas himself was worth two billion.) He is an old-fashioned, paternalistic chairman of the board, who gives each of his twelve hundred employees a turkey at Thanksgiving, and who sits every month at the head of the locally carpentered redwood boardroom table in the main house and listens to reports from the presidents of the various divisions of his enterprise.

"My father provided me with a lot of business principles—a small-town retail-business ethic, and I guess I learned it," Lucas told me in his frail-sounding voice. "It's sort of ironic, because I swore when I was a kid I'd never do what he did. At eighteen, we had this big break, when he wanted me to go into the business"—George, Sr., owned an office-supply store—"and I refused, and I told him, 'There are two things I know for sure. One is that I will end up doing something with cars, whether I'm a racer, a mechanic, or whatever, and, two, that I will never be president of a company.' I guess I got outwitted."

Lucas's most significant business decision—one that seemed laughable to the Fox executives at the time—was to forgo his option to receive an additional five-hundred-thousand-dollar fee from Fox for directing "Star Wars" and to take the merchandising and sequel rights instead. The sequels did almost as well as the first movie, and the value of the Star Wars brand, after going into a hiatus in the late eighties, reëmerged around 1991, when Bantam published "Heir to the Empire," by Timothy Zahn, wherein Princess Leia and Han Solo have children. The book surprised the publishing world by going to No. 1 on the *Times* hardcover-fiction list, and marketers quickly discovered a new generation of kids who had never seen the movies in theatres but were nevertheless obsessed with Star Wars.

When I asked Lucas what Star Wars was ultimately about, he said, "Redemption."

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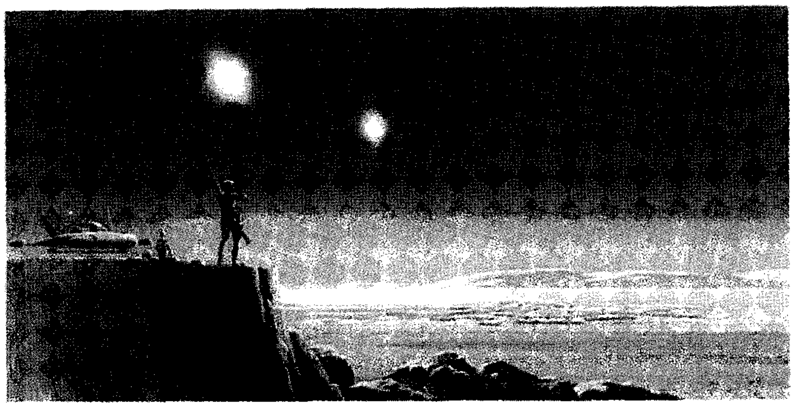
Lucas's business success as the owner of Star Wars, however, has had the ironic result of taking him away from the thing that touched his audience in the first place. He told me he'd stopped directing movies because "when you're directing, you can't see the whole picture." He explained, "You want to take a step back, be the over-all force behind it—like a television executive producer. Once I started doing that, I drifted further and further away. Then I had a family, and that changed things—it's very hard to direct a movie and be a single parent at the same time." Then his company became a big business. "The company started as a filmmaking operation. I needed a screening room, then a place to do post, then mixing, then special effects—because, remember, I was in San Francisco. You can't just go down the street and find this stuff—you have to build it. Everything in the company has come out of my interests, and for a long time it was a struggle. But six years ago the company started coming into its own. The CD-ROM market, which we had been sitting on for fifteen years, suddenly took off, and digital-filmmaking techniques took off—they are five times larger than six years ago—and suddenly I had a big company, and I had to pay attention to it." He estimated that he now spends thirty-five per cent of his time on his family, thirty-five per cent on movies, and thirty per cent on the company.

Lucas's day-to-day activities in the main house include the management of the Star Wars story, which is probably the most carefully tended secular story on Earth. Unlike Star Trek, which is a series of episodes connected by no central narrative, Star Wars is a single story—"a finite, expanding universe," in the words of Tom Dupree, who edits Bantam's Star Wars novels in New York. Everyone in the content-creating galaxy of Star Wars has a copy of "The Bible," a burgeoning canonical document (currently a hundred and seventy pages long) that is maintained by "continuity editors" Allan Kausch and Sue Rostoni. It is a chronology of all the events that have ever occurred in the Star Wars universe, in all the films, books, CD-ROMs, Nintendo games, comic books, and role-playing guides, and each medium is seamlessly coördinated with the others. For example, a new Lucas story called "Shadows of the Empire" is being told simultaneously in several media. A recent Bantam novel introduces a smuggling enterprise, led by the evil Prince Xizor, within the time line of the original trilogy. Three weeks before Christmas, he



Lucas has not decided whether he will make the final three movies, but he has allowed the future of Han, Luke, Leia, and the rest to be colonized by other media.

crossed over into the digital realm: he began to appear in the new sixty-four-bit Nintendo playstations. Meanwhile, Dark Horse comics is also featuring the Prince, along with related characters, like the bounty hunter Boba Fett. (Boba had only a few minutes of screen time in the movies, but has become one of the most popular characters among gen-X fans.)

New developments in even the remotest corners of the Star Wars universe are always approved by Lucas himself. The continuity editors send him checklists of potential events, and Lucas checks yes or no. "When Bantam wanted to do the back story on Yoda," Dupree said, "George said that was off limits, because he wanted him to remain a mysterious character. But George has made available some time between the start of Episode Four, when Han Solo is a young pilot on the planet Corellia, and the end of the prequel, so we're working with that now." Although Lucas had once imagined Star Wars as a nine-part saga, he hasn't yet decided whether he wants to make the final three movies, but he has allowed licensees to build into the narrative space on the future side of "Jedi"; the later years of Han, Luke, Leia, and the rest of the characters have been colonized by other media.

"George creates the stories, we create the places," Jack Sorensen, the president of LucasArts, told me in explaining how the interactive division fits into the Lucas multimedia empire. "Say you're watching the movie, and you see some planet that's just in the background of the movie, and you go, 'Hey, I wonder what that planet is like?' There's a lot going on on a planet, you know. So we'll make that planet the environment for a game. In a film, George would have to keep moving, but the games give you a chance to explore."

I asked Sorensen to explain the extraordinary appeal of Star Wars, and he said, "I'm as perplexed by this as anyone, and I'm right in the midst of it. I travel all the time for this job, and I meet people abroad, in Italy, or in France, who are totally obsessed with 'Star Wars.' I met this Frenchman recently who told me he watches it every week. I don't really think this is caused by some evil master plan of merchandisers and marketers. The demand is already out there, and we're just meeting it—it would exist without us. I don't know if I want to say this in print, but I feel like Star Wars is the mythology of a nonsectarian world. It describes how people want to live. People all view politics as corrupt, much more so in Europe than here, and yet people are not cynical underneath—they want to believe in something pure, noble. That's Star Wars."

"STAR WARS" still seems pure in some ways, but in other ways it doesn't. The qualities that seemed uncommercial about it at the time Lucas was trying to make it—most strikingly, that the literary elements (the characters and the plot) were subordinate to the purely cinematic elements (motion)—are the very qualities that seem commercial about it now. This is one way of measuring how "Star Wars" has changed both movies and the people who go to movies.

"I'm a visual filmmaker," Lucas told me. "I do films that are kinetic, and I tend to focus on character as it is created through editing and light, not stories. I started out as a harsh enemy of story and character, in my film-school days, but then I fell under Francis's mentorship, and his challenge to me after 'THX 1138' was to make a more conventional movie. So I did 'American Graffiti,' but they said that was just a montage of sounds, and then I did 'Star Wars.' I was always coming from pure cinema—I was using the grammar of film to create content. I think graphically, not linearly."

The first Star Wars movie is like a two-hour-long image of raw speed. If you saw it when you were young, this tends to be what you remember—the feeling of going really fast. Lucas is a genius of speed. His first ambition was to be a race-car driver, and it was only after he was nearly killed in a terrible accident, when he was eighteen—he lived because his seat belt unaccountably broke and he was hurled free of the car—that his interest shifted to film. (His first moving pictures were of race cars.) Perhaps the most memorable single image in "Star Wars" is the shot of the Millennium Falcon going into hyperspace for the first time, when the stars blur past the cockpit. Like all the effects in the movie, this works not because it is a cool effect (it's actually pretty low tech—merely "motion blur" photography) but because it's a powerful graphic distillation of the feeling the whole movie gives you: an image of pure kinetic energy which has become a permanent part of the world's visual imagination. (The other day, I was out running, and as a couple of rollerbladers went whizzing by I heard a jogger in front of me say to his friend, "It's like that scene in 'Star Wars' when they go into hyperspace.") Insofar as a media-induced state of speed has become a condition of modern life, Lucas was anticipating the Zeitgeist in "Star Wars."

The problems arise when Lucas has to slow down. In "Radioland Murders," the characters have to carry the narrative, but Lucas couldn't make this work, so he had to speed up the pace and turn the movie into farce. Also, because Lucas has little rapport with actors, his films tend to have only passable acting in them, which forces him to rely unduly on pace and editing. Mark Hamill once said, "I have a sneaking suspicion that if there were a way to make movies without actors, George would do it." Lucas is well known to be impatient with actors' histrionics, and has little interest in becoming involved in their discussions about method. Harrison Ford told me that Lucas had only two directions for the actors in "Star Wars"; he replayed them for me over huevos rancheros on the terrace at the Bel Air Hotel one Saturday morning, using his George-as-director voice—nasal, high, kind of whiny. The two directions were "O.K., same thing, only better," and "Faster, more intense." Ford said, "That was it: 'O.K., same thing, only better.' 'Faster, more intense.' "

For serious Star Wars fans—the true believers—Lucas's story tends to mingle with Luke's, the real one becoming proof that the mythic one can come true, and the mythic one giving the real one a kind of larger-than-life significance. Just as Luke is a boy on the backwater planet of Tatooine—he is obedient to his uncle, who wants him to stay on the farm, but he dreams that there might be a place for him somewhere out there in the larger world of adventure—so Lucas was a boy in the backwater town of Modesto, California. He dreamed of being a great race-car driver, but his liberal-bashing, moralizing father wanted him to stay at home and take over the family business. (Pollock's book recounts how his father liked to humiliate him every summer by chopping off his hair.) Just as a benevolent father figure (Obi-Wan) helps Luke in his struggle against his dark father, the older Coppola took young George under his wing at film school, and helped him get his first feature film made. And, just as Luke at the end of the first Star Wars film realizes his destiny and becomes a sort of hero-knight, so Lucas became the successful filmmaker, fulfilling a prophecy he'd made to his father in 1962, two years before he left Modesto for U.S.C., which was that he would be "a millionaire before I'm thirty."

But both Luke and Lucas have had to reckon with their patrimony. There's the famous scene on the Cloud City catwalk in "Empire" when Darth reveals that he is Luke's father. He has cut off Luke's hand and tries to turn him to the dark side, saying, "Join me, and together we can rule the galaxy as father and son!": Luke responds by leaping off the catwalk into the abyss. Just as Luke has to contend with the qualities he may have inherited from Darth Vader, so Lucas, in his career after "Star Wars," has stopped directing films and has become the successful, fiscally conservative businessman that his father always wanted him to be.

The scripts for the prequel, which Lucas is finishing now, make it clear that Star Wars, taken as a whole story and viewed in chronological order, is not really the story of Luke at all but the story of Luke's father, Anakin Skywalker, and how he, a Jedi Knight, was corrupted by the dark side of the Force and became Darth Vader. When I asked Lucas what Star Wars was ultimately about, he said, "Redemption." He added, "The scripts to the three films that I'm finishing now are a lot darker than the second three, because they are about a fall from grace. The first movie is pretty innocent, but it goes downhill from there, because it's more of a tragic story—that's built into it."

I said that the innocence was what many people found so compelling about the first Star Wars movie, and I asked whether it was harder for him, now that he is twenty years less innocent, to go back to work on the material.

"Of course your perspective changes when you get older and as you get battered by life," he said.

"Have you been battered by life?"

"Anyone who lives is going to get battered. Nothing comes easy."

I believed him. He was Yoda, after all. He had lived for almost nine hundred years. He had known the sons who triumph over their dark fathers only to find themselves in the murkier situation of being fathers themselves, and that knowledge had made him wise but it had also worn him out. That was the note of loss in his voice—the thing that the Star Wars trilogy didn't allow very often onto the screen, but it was there in the background, like the remnants of blue screens you could see in "Empire," in the thin outlines surrounding the Imperial Walkers on the ice planet Hoth. (These flaws have been digitally erased in the "Special Edition.")

Did Lucas worry about being turned to the dark side himself—did fame, money, or power tempt him? Or maybe it happened more slowly and subtly, with the temptation to stop being a filmmaker and become a kind of master toymaker instead, which is fun until you wake up one day and realize you have become one of your own toys. You could see that starting to occur in "Jedi": the Ewoks, those lovable furry creatures, seemed destined for the toy store even before they helped Luke defeat the Empire.

"The world is all yours," I said to Lucas. "You could have anything you wanted."

"Like what?" he asked. "What do I want? What do you want? Basically I just like to make movies, and I like raising a family, and whatever money I've made I've plowed back into the company. I've only ever been tempted by making movies—I don't need yachts, I'm not a party animal, and holding and using power over people never interested me. The only dangerous side of having this money is that I will make movies that aren't commercial. But, of course, 'Star Wars' was not considered commercial when I did it."

III—THE STORY

Since "Star Wars" sprang into Lucas's mind first as pictures, not as a narrative, he needed a line on which to hang his images. He studied Joseph Campbell's books on mythology, among other sources, taking structural elements from many different myths and trying to combine them into one epic story. One can go through "Star Wars" and almost pick out chapter headings from Campbell's "The Hero with a Thousand Faces": the hero's call to adventure, the refusal of the call, the arrival of supernatural aid, the crossing of the first threshold, the belly of the whale, and the series of ordeals culminating in a showdown with the angry father, when, at last, as Campbell writes, "the hero . . . beholds the face of the father, understands—and the two are atoned"—which is precisely what happens at the end of "Jedi." Lucas worked this way partly out of a conscious desire to create a story that would touch people—it was a kind of get-'em-by-the-archetypes-and-their-hearts-and-minds-will-follow approach—but it also appears to have been an artistic necessity.

"When I was in college, for two years I studied anthropology—that was basically all I did," Lucas said as we sat in his basement den. The glow of the

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Today, some studio executive would get to the point where Darth Vader is revealed as Luke's father and he would say, "Give me a break."

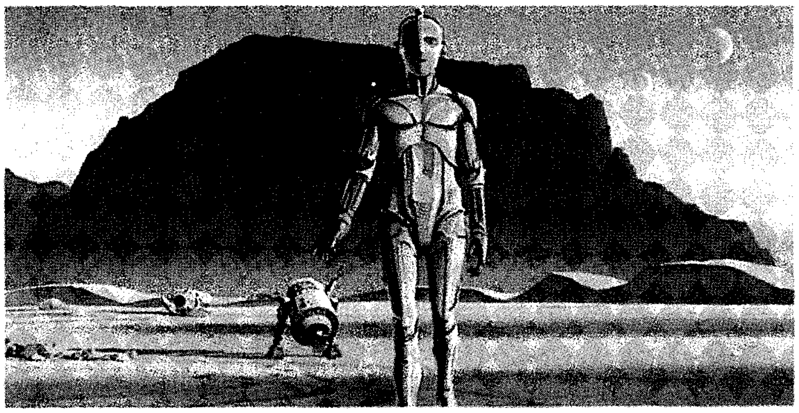
blank TV screen illuminated his face. "Myths, stories from other cultures. It seemed to me that there was no longer a lot of mythology in our society—the kind of stories we tell ourselves and our children, which is the way our heritage is passed down. Westerns used to provide that, but there weren't Westerns anymore. I wanted to find a new form. So I looked around, and tried to figure out where myth comes from. It comes from the borders of society, from out there, from places of mystery—the wide Sargasso Sea. And I thought, Space. Because back then space was a source of great mystery. So I thought, O.K., let's see what we can do with all those elements. I put them all into a bag, along with a little bit of 'Flash Gordon' and a few other things, and out fell 'Star Wars.' "

He said that his intention in writing "Star Wars" was explicitly didactic: he wanted it to be a good lesson as well as a good movie. "I wanted it to be a traditional moral study, to have some sort of palpable precepts in it that children could understand. There is always a lesson to be learned. Where do these lessons come from? Traditionally, we get them from church, the family, art, and in the modern world we get them from media—from movies." He added, "Everyone teaches in every work of art. In almost everything you do, you teach, whether you are aware of it or not. Some people aren't aware of what they are teaching. They should be wiser. Everybody teaches all the time."

Lucas's first attempt at writing the story lasted from February, 1972, to May, 1973, during which he produced the thirteen-page plot summary that his friend Laddie (Alan Ladd) paid him fifteen thousand dollars to develop into a script. Like "American Graffiti," which had been a montage of radio sounds, this treatment was like a montage of narrative fragments. It took Lucas another year to write a first draft; he is an agonizingly slow writer. He composed "Star Wars" with No. 2 pencils, in tiny, compulsively neat-looking script, on green-and-blue-lined paper, with atrocious spelling and grammar. Realizing that he had too much stuff for one movie, he cut the original screenplay in half, and the first half was the germ for the three scripts he is finishing now; the second half became the original trilogy. (Lucas's way of making the future into the past is thus part of the structure of Star Wars. Many people don't remember this, but the first movie was called, in full, "Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope.")

He showed his first draft to a few people, but neither Laddie nor George's friends could make much sense of it. "It only made sense when George would put it in context with past movies, and he'd say, 'It's like that scene in "Dam Busters," ' " Ladd told me, in his office on the Paramount lot. The only characters that Lucas seemed to have a natural affinity for were the droids, C-3PO and R2-D2. In early drafts, the first thirty pages focussed almost entirely on the droids; the feeling was closer to the Orwellian mood of "THX 1138." Based on his friends' reactions, Lucas realized he would need to put the humans on the screen earlier, in order to get the audience involved. But his dialogue was wooden and labored. "When I left you, I was but the learner," Darth says to Obi-Wan, before dispatching the old gentleman with his sabre. "I am the master now!" Harrison Ford's well-known remark about Lucas's dialogue, which he repeated for me, was "George, you can type this shit, but you sure can't say it."

Lucas also borrowed heavily from the film-school canon. The lightsabres and Jedi Knights were inspired by Kurosawa's "Hidden Fortress," C-3PO's look by Fritz Lang's "Metropolis," the ceremony at the end by Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph of the Will." Alec Guinness does a sort of optimistic reprise of his Prince Feisal character from "Lawrence of Arabia," while Harrison Ford plays Butch Cassidy. Critics of "Star Wars" point to the film's many borrowings as evidence of Lucas's failure as a filmmaker. (It is said of Lucas, as it was of Henry Ford, that he didn't actually invent anything.) But "Star Wars" fans see this as a brilliant postmodernist commentary on the history of popular film. Lucas uses these references with a childlike lack of irony that Scorsese, De Palma, or Spielberg would probably be incapable of, because they grew up with the movies. The critic and screenwriter Jay Cocks, a longtime friend of Lucas's, told me, "I don't think George went to a lot of movies as a kid, like Marty and Brian. Before arriving at film school, he hadn't seen 'Alexander Nevsky' or 'Potemkin'; I don't think he even saw 'Citizen Kane.' I remember when I went up to this little cabin he and Marcia had in Northern California, and I saw he had some Flash Gordon comic strips, drawn by Alex Raymond, on his desk, and a picture of Eisenstein on his wall, and the combination of those two were really the basis for George's aesthetic in 'Star Wars.' "



After the first screening, everyone was saying, "My God, what a disaster!" All except Steven Spielberg, who said, "No, that movie is going to make a hundred million dollars."

But Lucas added many small personal details to the story as well, which is part of what gives his creation its sensuous feeling of warmth. According to Pollock, the little robot is called R2-D2 because that was how Walter Murch, the sound editor on "American Graffiti," asked for the Reel 2, Dialogue 2 tape when they were in the editing room one day, and for some reason "R2-D2" stuck in George's mind. The Wookiee was inspired by Marcia's female Alaskan malamute, Indiana (who also lent her name to Lucas's other great invention); the image of Chewie came to George in a flash one day as the dog was sitting next to Marcia in the front seat of the car. Many of Ben Burtt's sounds for the movie also had personal significance. He told me that the buzzing sound of the lightsabre was the drone that an old U.S.C. film-school projector made. The pinging sound of the blasters was the sound made one day when Burtt was out hiking and caught the top of his backpack on some guy wires.

Shooting of the interiors began in March, 1976, in Elstree Studios, outside London, and lasted four months. The English crew were awful to Lucas. "They just thought it was all very unsophisticated," Harrison Ford told me. "I mean, here's this seven-foot-tall man in a big hairy suit. They referred to Chewie as 'the dog.' You know, 'Bring the dog in.' And George isn't the best at dealing with those human situations—to say the least." Meanwhile, Lucas was struggling with Fox to get more than the nine million dollars that Fox wanted to spend (the movie ended up costing about ten million to make), and he was paranoid that the studio was going to take the movie away from him, or, treat it the way that Universal had treated "Graffiti."

Lawrence Kasdan, who co-wrote the scripts for "Empire" and "Jedi" and also wrote the script for the first Indiana Jones movie, thinks Lucas's antagonistic relationship with Hollywood is what "Star Wars" is really about. "The Jedi Knight is the filmmaker, who can come in and use the Force to impose his will on the studio," he told me. "You know that scene when Alec Guinness uses the Force to say to the Storm Trooper outside the Mos Eisley cantina, 'These aren't the droids you're looking for,' and the guy answers, 'These aren't the droids we're looking for'? Well, when the studio executive says, 'You won't make this movie,' you say, 'I *will* make this movie,' and then the exec agrees, 'You will make this movie.' I once asked him, 'George, where did you get the confidence to argue with Ned Tanen?' He said, 'Your power comes from the fact that you are the creator.' And that had an enormous influence on me."

When a rough cut of "Star Wars" had been edited together, George arranged a screening of the film at his house. The party travelling up from Los Angeles included Spielberg, Ladd, De Palma, a few other friends of George's, and some Fox executives. "Marty was supposed to come, too," the screenwriter Willard Huyck told me, referring to Martin Scorsese, "but the weather was bad and the plane was delayed and finally Marty just went home."

"Marty had an anxiety attack is what happened," Gloria Katz, Huyck's wife and writing partner, put in. Huyck and Katz are old friends of Lucas's, who co-wrote "Graffiti" with him, and are the beneficiaries of George's generous gift of two points of "Star Wars" for their help on the script.

"Marty's very competitive, and so is George," Huyck went on. "All these guys are. And at that time Marty was working on 'New York, New York,' which George's wife, Marcia, was editing, and everybody was saying that it was going to be the big picture of the year—but here we were all talking about 'Star Wars.' "

Here, at this first screening of "Star Wars," a group of writers, directors, and executives, all with ambitions to make more or less artistically accomplished Hollywood films, were confronting the template of the future—the film that would in one way or another determine everyone's career. Not surprisingly, almost every one of them hated it. Polite applause in the screening room, no cheers—a "real sweaty-palm time," Jay Cocks, who was also there, said. It's possible that, just this once, before the tsunami of marketing and megatude closed over "Star Wars" forever, these people were seeing the movie for what it really was—a film with comic-book characters, an unbelievable story, no political or social commentary, lousy acting, preposterous dialogue, and a ridiculously simplistic morality. In other words, a bad movie.

"So we watch the movie," Huyck said, "and the crawl went on forever, there was tons of back story, and then we're in this spaceship, and then here's Darth Vader. Part of the problem was that almost none of the effects were finished, and in their place George had inserted World War Two dogfight footage, so one second you're with the Wookiee in the spaceship and the next you're in 'The Bridges at Toko-Ri.' It was like, *George, what-is-going-on?*"

"When the film ended, people were aghast," Katz said. "Marcia was really upset—she was saying, 'Oh my God, it's "At Long Last Love," ' which was the Bogdanovich picture that was such a disaster the year before. We said, 'Marcia, fake it, fake it. *Laddie is watching.*' "

Huyck: "Then we all got into these cars to go someplace for lunch, and in our car everyone is saying, 'My God, what a disaster!' All except Steven, who said, 'No, that movie is going to make a hundred million dollars, and I'll tell you why—it has a marvellous innocence and naïveté in it, which is George, and people will love it.' And that impressed us, that he would think that, but of course no one believed him."

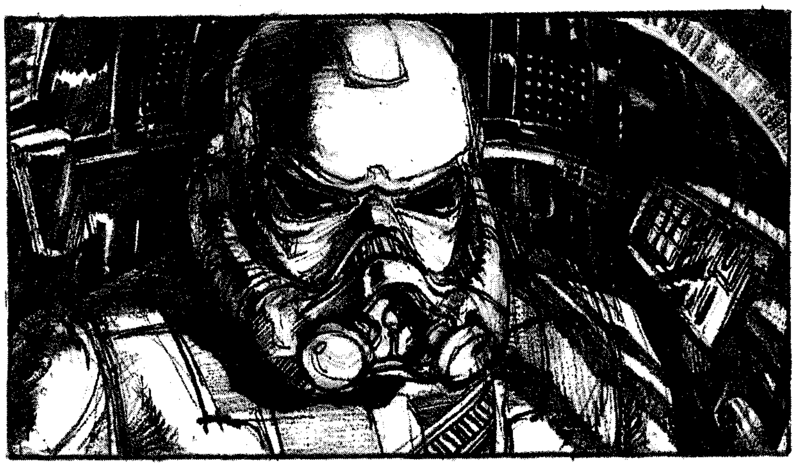
Katz: "We sat down to eat, and Brian started making fun of the movie. He was very acerbic and funny."

"Which is the way Brian *is*," Huyck said. "You know, 'Hey George, what were those Danish rolls doing in the princess's ears?' We all sat there very nervously while Brian let George have it, and George just sort of sank deeper into his chair. Brian was pretty rough. I don't know if Marcia ever forgave Brian for that."

When the movie opened, Huyck and Katz went with George and Marcia to hide out in Hawaii. On their second day there, Huyck told me, "Laddie called on the phone and said, 'Turn on the evening news.' Why? 'Just watch the evening news,' he said. So we turned it on, and Walter Cronkite was on saying, 'There's something extraordinary happening out there, and it's all the result of a new movie called "Star Wars." ' Cut to lines around the block in Manhattan. It was absolutely amazing. We were all stunned. Now, of course, the studios can tell you what a movie is going to do—they have it down to a science, and they can literally predict how a movie is going to open. But in those days they didn't know."

DEAN DEVLIN, one of the creators of "Independence Day," was fourteen years old when "Star Wars" came out. He remembers being sixth in line on the day the movie opened at Mann's Chinese Theatre, in Hollywood, on May 25, 1977. "I don't even know why I wanted to see it," he told me when I went to talk with him in his office, just off the commissary at Paramount. "I just knew I had to be there." The movie changed his life. "To me, 'Star Wars' was like the 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' of movies. You know how people like David Bowie say that that was the album that made them see what was possible in pop music? I think 'Star Wars' did the same thing for popcorn movies. It made you see what was possible." He added, " 'Star Wars' was the movie that made me say, I want to do something like that." "Stargate" and "Independence Day" are what he has done so far, and the day after we talked he and his partner, Roland Emmerich, were leaving for Mexico, to hole up and work on their next film, "Godzilla."

" 'Star Wars' was a serious breakthrough, a shift in the culture, which was possible only because George was this weird character," Lawrence Kasdan said. "After you saw it, you thought, My God, anything is possible. He opened up people's minds. I mean, the amazing thing about cinema technology is that it hasn't changed since it started. It's mind-boggling. With all these changes in technology, and the computer, we're still pulling this little piece of plastic through a machine and shining light through it. Very few directors change things. Welles did things differently. But everything is different after 'Star Wars.' All other pictures reflect its influence, some by ignoring it or rebelling against it." Every time a studio executive tells a writer that his piercing and true story needs an "action beat" every ten minutes, the writer has George Lucas to thank. "Ransom," the recent movie by Lucas's protégé Ron Howard, is two hours' worth of such action beats and little else.



The English crew were awful to Lucas. "They just thought it was all very unsophisticated," Harrison Ford said.

ALEX TAVOULARIS

Huyck suggested that one of the legacies of the trilogy's success is that a movie as fresh and unknowing as "Star Wars" wouldn't get made today. "Truffaut had the idea that filmmaking entered a period of decadence with the James Bond movies, and I'm not sure you couldn't say the same thing about 'Star Wars,' though you can't blame George for it," he told me. " 'Star Wars' made movies big business, which got the studio executives involved in every step of the development, to the point of being on the set and criticizing what the director is doing. Now they all take these screenwriting courses in film school and they think they know about movies—their notes are always the same. Both 'American Graffiti' and 'Star Wars' would have a very difficult time getting through the current system. 'Star Wars' would get pounded today. Some executive would get to the point where Darth Vader is revealed to be Luke's father and he would say, 'Give me a break.' "

These days, Kasdan said, "the *word* 'character' might come up at a development meeting with the executives, but if you asked them they couldn't tell you what character is." He went on, "Narrative structure doesn't exist—all that matters is what's going to happen in the next ten minutes to keep the audience interested. There's no faith in the audience. They can't have the story happen fast enough."

Twenty years ago, Pauline Kael suggested that in sacrificing character and complexity for non-stop action "Star Wars" threatened to turn movies into comic books, and today, in a week when two of the three top movies are "101 Dalmatians" and "Space Jam," it is easy to believe she was right. (I know which movies are on top because I read last week's grosses, along with the N.F.L. standings, in Monday's *Times:* another aspect of the blockbuster mentality that "Star Wars" helped to launch.)

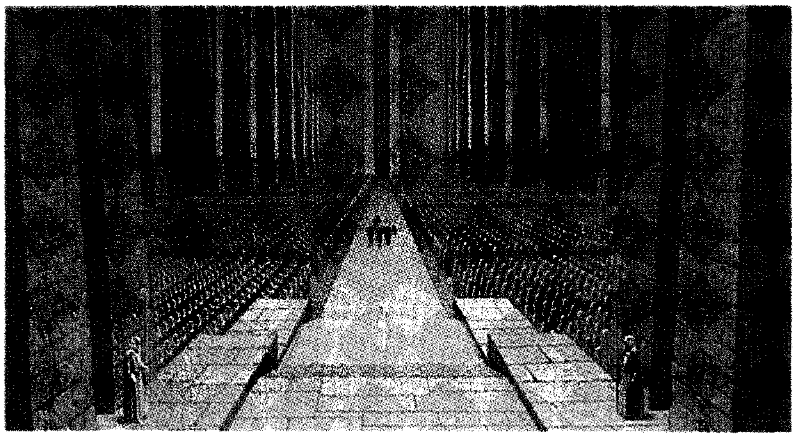
When I reminded Lucas of Kael's remark, he sighed and said, "Pauline Kael never liked my movies. It's like comparing novels and sonnets, and saying a sonnet's no good because it doesn't have the heft of a novel. It's not a valid criticism. After I did 'Graffiti,' my friends said, 'George, you should make more of an artistic statement,' but I feel 'Star Wars' did make a statement—in a more visual, less literary way. People said I should have made 'Apocalypse Now' after 'Graffiti,' and not 'Star Wars.' They said I should be doing movies like 'Taxi Driver.' I said, 'Well, "Star Wars" is a kids' movie, but I think it's just as valid an art film as "Taxi Driver." ' Besides, I couldn't ever do 'Taxi Driver.' I don't have it in me. I could do 'Koyaanisqatsi,' but not 'Taxi Driver.' But of course if the movie doesn't fit what they think movies should be, it shouldn't be allowed to exist. I think that's narrow-minded. I've been trying to rethink the art of movies—it's not a play, not a book, not music or dance. People were aware of that in the silent era, but when the talkies started they lost track of it. Film basically became a recording medium."

IV—THE MODEL SHOP

WHEN you're up at Skywalker Ranch, it's possible to imagine that the future is somehow going to end up saving the past after all, and that we will find on a new frontier what we lost a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away. But in San Rafael, at Industrial Light & Magic, this is harder to believe. Down here, where legions of young geeks work in high-tech, dark satanic mills and stare into computer screens as they build "polys" (the polygonal structures that are the basic elements of computer graphics), the future doesn't seem likely to save the past. The future destroys the past.

Take, for example, the I.L.M. model shop—a high-ceilinged space, full of creatures, ghosts, and crazy vehicles that were used in movies like "Ghostbusters" and "Back to the Future." It's like a museum of non-virtual reality. There are books on the torque capacity of different kinds of wrenches, cylinders of compressed gas, tools of all descriptions, and a feathery layer of construction dust covering everything. All the monsters, ships, weapons, and other effects in the original "Star Wars" were made in the model shop—by hand, more or less—by the team of carpenter-engineer-tinkerer-inventors assembled by Lucas. They used clay, rubber, foam latex, wire, and seven-foot-two hairy-Wookiee suits to create their illusions. (The only computers used in making the original "Star Wars" were used to control the motion of the cameras.) The modelmakers were so good at what they did that they unleashed a desire for better and better special effects in movies, which ended up putting a number of the people in the model shop out of work. "Either you learn the computer or you might as well work as a carpenter," one former member of the model shop said.

Today, the model shop survives as a somewhat vestigial operation, producing prototypes of the creatures and machines that will then be rendered in computer graphics for the movie screen. (While I was visiting I.L.M., I saw two carpenters working on a C-3PO, whose head, arms, and legs were spread all over the workbenches—he looked the way he did after the Sand People got done with him—and I asked, naïvely, if I would see him in one of the new movies. No, he was just another prototype.) One model-shop old-timer is the artist Paul Huston, who is still around because he has learned how to use the computer. Huston did oil-on-canvas matte paintings for the original "Star Wars"; he did digital matte paintings for the "Special Edition." (No one does any offscreen matte painting at I.L.M. anymore.) He showed me a tape of some of his digital additions to the first film, which occur before and after the famous Mos Eisley cantina scene, where a "C.G." (computer graphic) Jabba the Hutt will now confront Han Solo in the docking bay where the Millennium Falcon is waiting. (Ford did his half of the scene with a human actor inside a Jabba suit in 1976, but the footage was never used, because it didn't look good enough.) In order to create a crashed spaceship that is part of the background at the Mos Eisley spaceport, Huston actually built a real model, out of various bits scavenged from airplane and helicopter kits—this gave it a kind of ad-hoc, gnarled thingeyness—and he took it outside and photographed it in natural light. Then he scanned that image into the computer and worked on it with Photoshop. A more digitally inclined artist would probably have built the crashed spaceship from scratch right on the computer.



Insofar as a media-induced state of speed has become a condition of modern life, Lucas was anticipating the Zeitgeist in "Star Wars."

"To me, it comes down to whether you look to the computer for your reality or whether you look out there in the world," Huston said, pointing outside the darkened C.G. room where we were standing to the bright sunlight and the distant Marin hills. "I still think it's not in the computer, it's out there. It's much more interesting out there." He turned back to the spaceport image on the screen. "Look at the way the light bounces off the top of this tower, and how these shadows actually deepen here, when you'd expect them to get lighter—you would never think to do that on a computer."

Huston seemed like kind of a melancholy guy, with sad eyes behind small wire-rimmed glasses. He said he had accepted the fact that creations like the C.G. T. Rex in "Jurassic Park" were the way of the future, and that in many cases C.G. makes effects better. The model shop could never get lava to glow properly, for example, but with C.G. it's easy. Also, C.G. is more efficient—you can get more work done. "The skills that you needed ten years ago to do modelling and matte painting were hard to attain," he said. "Making models was a process of trial and error. There were no books to tell you how to do it. It was catch as catch can. Today, with the computer, you can get modelling software, which has a manual, and follow the instructions."

He gestured around at the monitors, scanners, and other machinery all over the place. "Our company has taken the position that the computer is the future, and we have moved aggressively toward that," he said. "I can see that's what everyone wants. In model-making there aren't many shortcuts. And this is a business of turnover and scheduling and getting as much work through the pipeline as you can. If there is a shortcut to doing something on a computer, and it's going to cost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the client will say, 'Oh sure, let's do it.' But if you offer them a model-building project for a third of that there are no takers. Because that's not what clients are interested in. So we're trying to do everything synthetically, with computers, to see how far we can go with that. Part of the interest and excitement is in the surprise—you don't know what is going to happen."

C.G. is supposed to make films cheaper to produce, and its champions continue to promise the nirvana of a movie made by one person on a P.C. for next to nothing. Dean Devlin, a large consumer of C.G., told me about "this

Lucas and Mark Hamill on the set in 1976. "E.T." and "Jurassic Park" both surpassed the "Star Wars" box-office record, but Lucas

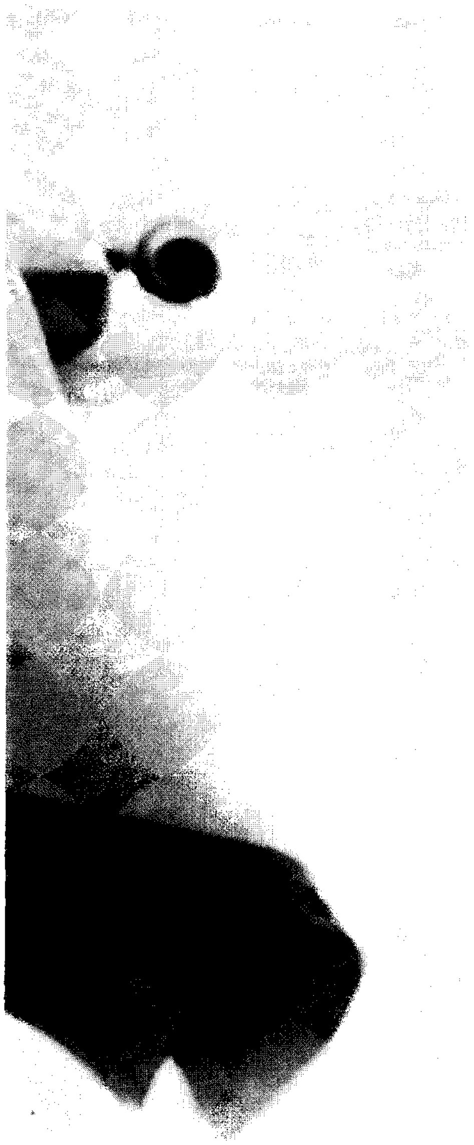
British kid who brought my partner Roland and me a full-length film he had shot for ten thousand dollars in a garage." He explained, "It was an excellent film with unbelievably good effects, and the way he shot it you couldn't tell it had mostly been done on a computer, and we looked at each other and said, 'It's coming.' A hundred-per-cent-C.G. live-action film, with no models." But so far C.G. has actually made movies more expensive than ever. When I asked Jim Morris, the president of Lucas Digital, I.L.M.'s parent company, why this was so, he said, "If we did the same shots now that we did in 'T2,' those shots would be cheaper today. The fly in the ointment is that very few directors are trying to do what has already been done. The line we hear ninety-nine per cent of the time is 'I want something that no one has ever seen before.' No one comes in and says, 'O.K., I'll take three twisters.' "

A potential milestone in C.G. toward which I.L.M. is racing its competitors—Jim Cameron's Digital Domain and Sony's Image Works—is the creation of the first "synthespian": a C.G. human actor in a live-action movie. "Toy Story," made by Pixar, a company that grew out of I.L.M. and which Lucas sold to Steve Jobs ten years ago, was an all-C.G. movie, but it starred toys; no one has yet made a believable C.G. human. In "Forrest Gump" audiences saw a little bit of Kennedy: What about a whole movie starring Kennedy? Or a new James Dean movie, in which Dean is a synthespian made up of bits digitally lifted from old images of him?

Recalling Mark Hamill's remark about Lucas—"I have a sneaking suspicion that if there were a way to make movies without actors, George would do it"—I asked Morris if he thought synthetics would ever be the stars of movies. Morris acknowledged that that was "a holy grail for some digital artists" but added that he didn't think a synthetic would be much of an improvement over an actor. "You get a lot for your money out of an actor," he said. "And even if you did replace him with a synthetic you're still likely to need an actor's voice, and you'd have the animator to deal with, so what's the advantage? That said, it does make sense when you're talking about safety. You don't have to have human beings putting themselves at risk doing stunts when you can have synthetics doing them."

One of the lessons "Star Wars" teaches is that friends who stick together and act courageously can overcome superior weapons, machines, and any other kind of technology. At the end of the first movie, Luke, down to his last chance to put a missile in the Death Star's weak spot (a maneuver that will blow up the reactor and save the Rebel Alliance from destruction), hears Obi-Wan telling him to turn off the targeting computer in his X-Wing fighter and rely on the Force instead: "Use the Force, Luke." Clearly, the lesson is that the Force is superior to machines. My visit to I.L.M. made me wonder if that lesson was true. At the very least, the situation seemed to be a lot more complex than "Star Wars" makes it out to be. The gleeful embrace of the latest thing, of the coolest effect, is a force that is at least equal to most other human qualities. The technology to create never-before-seen images also creates the desire to see even more amazing images, which makes the technology more and more powerful, and the people who use it correspondingly less important. And the power of business is not always in the service of human values or of making good films. Lucas has benevolently followed his business instincts into the new world of dazzling, digitally produced effects, and has built in I.L.M. a company that currently earns tens of millions of dollars a year and will probably earn much more in the future—the future! But his success is a sad blow to the fantasy that men are more powerful than machines.

"The possibilities of synthetic characters have grown enormously, and George will rely much more on those in the new 'Star Wars' movies," Morris went on. "People in rubber suits worked for back then, and added a certain charm, but there is only so much you can do with that in terms of motion. In C.G., there really aren't physical limitations. There are only believability issues, and George's sensitivity grounds that—he decides what works on the screen. Yoda was a Frank Oz puppet in 'Empire,' and that worked for an old, wizened Yoda who could hardly move. But in the prequels we're going to have a sixty-years-younger Yoda, and we'll probably see a synthetic Yoda instead." ♦



ping to take the record back with the prequel.

FICTION

NIGHTINGALE

No boy can be allowed to behave badly forever.

BY TOBIAS WOLFF

DR. BOOTH took several wrong turns during the drive upstate. It vexed him to get lost like this in front of his son, especially since the fault lay with the lousy map the Academy had sent him, but Owen was in one of his trances and didn't seem to notice. His eyes were fixed on the far distance and his lips formed whispery sounds in a cadence that suggested poetry or music. Dr. Booth knew better than to try and make sense of it, but he couldn't stop himself. He thought he recognized one word—"nightingale"—and that word awoke a memory of three children, himself and his older sisters, sitting in a garden at dusk while somewhere above them a bird sang. It was, he knew, a trick memory, a mirage: there had been no such garden and no such evening. But the thought of his sisters, one drowned in a boating accident courtesy of her dimwit husband, the other far away and silent for years, made him even gloomier than he already was.

Owen did not want to go to the Academy. He had made this plain when the idea first came up, but as Dr. Booth and his wife continued to discuss it, doubtfully to begin with, then slowly surrendering to its tidal pull, the boy had less and less to say. He receded further into the very remoteness Dr. Booth had been trying to lure him out of, and now, having failed, proposed to force him out of with the help of the school.

Dr. Booth had never heard of Fort Steele Academy until the brochure arrived in his mailbox. The cover showed a pair of uniformed boys standing guard on either side of a gate. It was snowing, and they appeared to have been there for some time: a good two inches had gathered on their epaulettes and caps. The last page of the brochure carried a statement by the Commandant, Colonel Karl: "It is no kindness to the young to pretend that life is not a struggle. The world belongs to men of will, and the sooner that lesson is learned, the better. We at Fort Steele are dedicated to teaching it by every means at our disposal."

Dr. Booth could well understand why Owen didn't want to go to the Academy. He was comfortable at home. He had his foolish dog, his lazy friends, the big house with all its sunny corners. When Dr. Booth went into the kitchen, there was Owen. In the living room, Owen again. The front yard, Owen; the back yard, the basement, the hammock—Owen! As a boy, Dr. Booth had delivered a hundred and eighty newspapers before school and hustled subscriptions at night. He played football. He ran for president of his class. Those memories of his own youth had figured heavily in the decision to send Owen away, but now, reviewing the list yet again, he thought he must be leaving something out, something conclusive. There was more; surely there was more.

"It won't be so bad," he said.

Owen was silent.

"Give it a chance, son. You might even like it." When Owen still didn't answer, Dr. Booth said—almost cried out—"It's for your own good."

"I know," Owen said.

"You do?"

"Yes."

"How do you know?"

"Because it's what you want."

This was the very answer he would have hoped for, and he knew that he should be satisfied with it, but he wasn't. It troubled him. Just then the road came to a fork not indicated on his map, and he had to do some guesswork. He decided to take the right branch, then at the last moment swerved onto the left, which led through a dense stand of maples that hung darkly over the road and opened up to reveal, across from a field golden with hay, the gates of Fort Steele Academy. Dr. Booth slowed down. He wasn't ready, he wanted a moment to probe the unease he felt, but when his car came into view the two cadets on either side of the gate snapped to attention and held their salutes until he had driven between them onto the grounds of the school. Owen braced his hands against the dashboard; Dr. Booth heard him take a deep breath. They bumped over the cobbled lane toward a courtyard bordered on three sides by gray stone buildings. Two flags waved from the pole in the yard: Old Glory on top, the school crest below—sabres crossed above a castle. A pair of cadets waited in the circular drive at the end of the lane, legs slightly apart, arms behind their backs. Like the guards at the gate, they wore black uniforms with white belts. Their eyes were shadowed by the gleaming bills of their caps.

"Son," Dr. Booth said, "what did you mean, it's what I want?"

Owen stared at him without comprehension.

Dr. Booth stopped the car. "Well? Owen? What do I want?"

"For me to grow up," Owen said, watching one of the cadets march toward them. He was tall and his chin was long and sharp and his belt buckle flashed like a beacon. He was carrying a clipboard in a crisp, prescribed-looking way. The cadet stopped in front of the car and waited as Dr. Booth and Owen got out.

"Name, sir?"

"Booth."

The cadet ran a finger down the clip-

FILIP PAGOWSKI

board. "Booth, Owen G., blood type A."

"That's my boy." Dr. Booth smiled at Owen, who stared dead ahead. He had attempted to square his thin shoulders and was holding his arms straight at his sides. He had never looked so young. Dr. Booth made up his mind to have a talk with Colonel Karl before he left. He wasn't going to leave his son here without some definite assurances.

"Private Booth is late, sir. Roll call for new men was 1300 hours."

"I'm aware of that. We had some trouble getting here. A lot of trouble, in fact. That map is practically worthless."

"I'm sure you have excellent reasons, sir. The fact remains, Private Booth is late. Private Booth will report immediately to the quartermaster. When Private Booth has drawn his gear, he will move smartly to D Barrack and await orders. Corporal Costello will escort him. You can leave his bags here." The cadet snapped his fingers. The other cadet stepped forward.

Owen turned quickly to Dr. Booth and held out his hand. Dr. Booth understood that he did this to prevent the embrace he knew was coming, which the Doctor, wounded, was tempted to impose on him anyway. But he took his son's hand in his own.

"Goodbye, sir," Owen said. Then he fell in behind Corporal Costello and followed him across the courtyard, trying to match the cadet's precise stride and rigid carriage. He didn't even come close, and Dr. Booth knew that he never would. The distracted saunter he kept breaking into was not an accident of age, something to be outgrown or overcome: it was, in truth, nothing less than Owen himself.

"I need to speak with Colonel Karl," Dr. Booth said.

"Colonel Karl is busy, sir," the cadet said.

Dr. Booth insisted, and finally the cadet led him to a windowless lounge in the basement of the far building. He was alone there. An aerial photograph of the school occupied one wall; otherwise the room was bare of ornament. Four overstuffed chairs faced a coffee table bearing an Academy brochure identical to the one Dr. Booth had received. He picked it up and slowly turned the pages, then set it down and paced the room. A silent grandfather clock, hands frozen at 6:18, stood in one corner, an empty umbrella stand in another. Time passed. Dr. Booth went upstairs to the door of the building. The courtyard was empty. The flags drooped on their pole. He stepped outside and, seeing no one, followed a brick pathway around back in the direction Owen had gone. The path skirted a deserted football field with bleachers on one side, then led past a pond covered with lily pads. On the opposite bank, black against the hazy sky, rose the stone walls and battlemented tower of what Dr. Booth recognized from the brochure as Memorial Chapel. The path he was on turned away in the opposite direction. He left it and pushed through clumps of sumac and elder to the other side of the pond.

One half of the arched door was locked, the other slightly ajar. Dr. Booth listened, heard nothing, and entered the chapel. Weak light fell aslant through the long narrow windows—windows like gun slits. It seemed to dim rather than brighten the oak pews and stone floors. There was no organ. The altar was bare. On the platform in front of the altar, facing the pews, someone had placed a high-backed wooden chair. Dr. Booth could not make out its purpose. If one wished to address the congregation, one would surely use the carved pulpit with its superior elevation and authority. One would stand, not sit. He studied the chair from the rear of the chapel, then started down the aisle. In obedience to an impulse he was hardly aware of but could not resist, Dr. Booth held his upper body stiff and paused for a beat after each step, one foot trailing, heel raised. He had never marched before, but he marched in this fashion the length of the aisle and climbed to the altar, where he executed a perfect about-face and then, as if on command, lowered himself onto the chair, back straight, hands in his lap.

How quiet it was. Dr. Booth looked out into the chapel, at the sombre pews where the cadets would file in and stand waiting and then take their seats in a single motion—one great creak, then silence. Whoever sat in this chair could see the face of every cadet. Dr. Booth could almost see the faces himself, row after row of them, faintly luminous in the shadows. He could feel them watching him from behind their unblinking eyes, weighing him in the scales, and then it came to him that this was the place of judgment. This was where you sat to have your faults revealed and to receive your sentence. Dr. Booth looked away, at the heavy beams overhead, the roof slanting up into darkness. He closed his eyes. Still he saw the faces of the cadets, taut and pale above their black uniforms. He strained to find among them some glint of fellow-feeling, some intimation of mercy; he found none.

The door swung open at the rear of the chapel and a cadet stood silhouetted in the doorway. "Sir," he said.

Dr. Booth stood clumsily, knocking over the chair. He set it right and hurried up the aisle. "Coming," he called out.

The cadet held the door for Dr. Booth and followed him outside, where another cadet—the tall one who'd scolded him for being late—passed on Colonel Karl's deepest regrets that, owing to prior obligations, he was unable to speak with Dr. Booth this afternoon. The Doctor could return the next morning if he wished or call for an appointment at some later date.

Dr. Booth supposed he could raise a fuss and make it impossible for Colonel Karl not to see him, but he was worried about the trouble this might cause Owen, and anyway he had to get back on the road if he was to reach home before dark. He was ready to leave Fort Steele Academy; he was ready almost to the point of panic. So he accepted Colonel Karl's message without protest and allowed the two cadets to take him back to his car. They led him like a prisoner, the tall one in front, the other at his heels, but saluted elegantly when he started the engine and drove back down the lane. The guards at the gate also saluted. In the field across the road a green tractor moved slowly along the fence, pulling a mower. The smell of fresh-cut hay filled the car and lingered until Dr. Booth was several miles away, and lost again.

HE parked on the shoulder of the road, engine ticking, and choked back his rage just enough to hold the goddam-son-of-a-bitch map without tearing it to pieces. With a trembling finger he tried to retrace his route: he'd taken this road through the maple grove beyond the school, yes, then it must've been this one, here, that had carried him over an unmarked bridge and thence to a triple fork, also unmarked, where he'd been forced to make the first of a long series of choices for which he had received no guidance, before finally coming to rest in this vast flatland whose very existence went completely unremarked by the map.

A water tower gleamed in the distance. The reek of manure lay heavy on the air. Three white-faced cows watched from the fence to his left as Dr. Booth continued to study the map, this time in reverse, trying to find the various roads that he and Owen had followed from home to the Academy. Only the first couple of turns off the interstate were correctly indicated. It was a pure miracle he had ever found the school, given that he'd had to make his way there almost entirely on hunches.

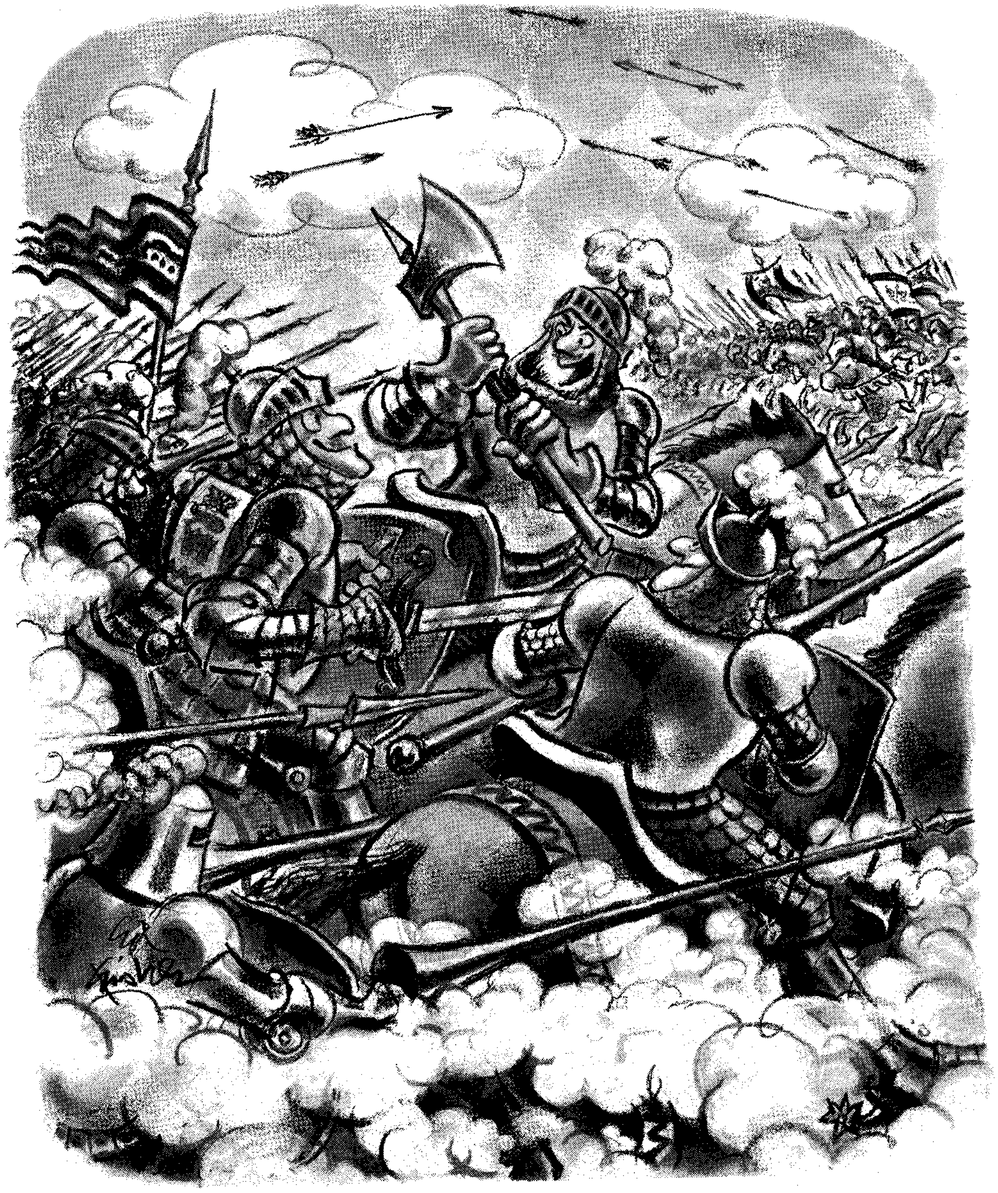
He crumpled the map and threw it out the window. One of the cows took a step backward, then continued to ruminate and stare. Dr. Booth was thinking about the aerial photograph in the lounge. He saw it again in detail. There was no pond in the picture, and the chapel stood a good distance from its actual location, forming part of a quadrangle. That quadrangle did not exist. Like the map, the aerial photograph was a fiction.

Once Dr. Booth recognized this, he had to entertain a number of questions he'd been trying to shrug off. During his time at the Academy, he had seen only a few cadets—the guards, and the ones who had taken charge of Owen. Where were all the other boys in this school of five hundred? Why hadn't he run across any of them out marching around, or heard their voices? How had *their* parents found the way? Why wouldn't Colonel Karl see him, or at least send a deputy?

Dr. Booth turned the car around and started back the way he'd come. He was determined not to leave Owen in that place. He saw a crossroad approaching and knew without doubt that he should turn right. The certainty he felt was surprising and tonic, like the first deep breath when he left the hospital at day's end. He knew where he was going now.

How had this happened? The brochure had arrived—but why? And why had he considered it at all—the surrender of his boy to unknown disciplines and judgments, to powers of which he knew nothing, except that they were without patience, or humor, or mercy? His wife had resisted at first, but in spite of his own doubts he bullied her along until she, like Owen, saw the futility of argument. They had no choice in the matter; nor, it then seemed to him, did he. From the moment he saw the brochure he had known, unhappily, miserably in fact, that Owen would go there. His attempts to talk himself out of it left him even more helplessly snarled in justifications that now seemed trivial, baffling.

He had compared Owen to himself—how, in his youth, he had sold newspapers and played sports and run for office. That much was true. But he'd never actually been elected; he had offered himself up year after year and received nothing for his pains but more humiliation. His father had made him take on the paper route because they needed the money, and he'd hated every minute of it, the waking in darkness, the cold and rain, the way his customers cried poor and hid from him. He'd played varsity football, yes, but only in his senior



"At last! After all the debates and polls, it's back to real politics!"

year, when his little brother took over the route. Owen was much younger than he had been then. Much younger. How had he forgotten?

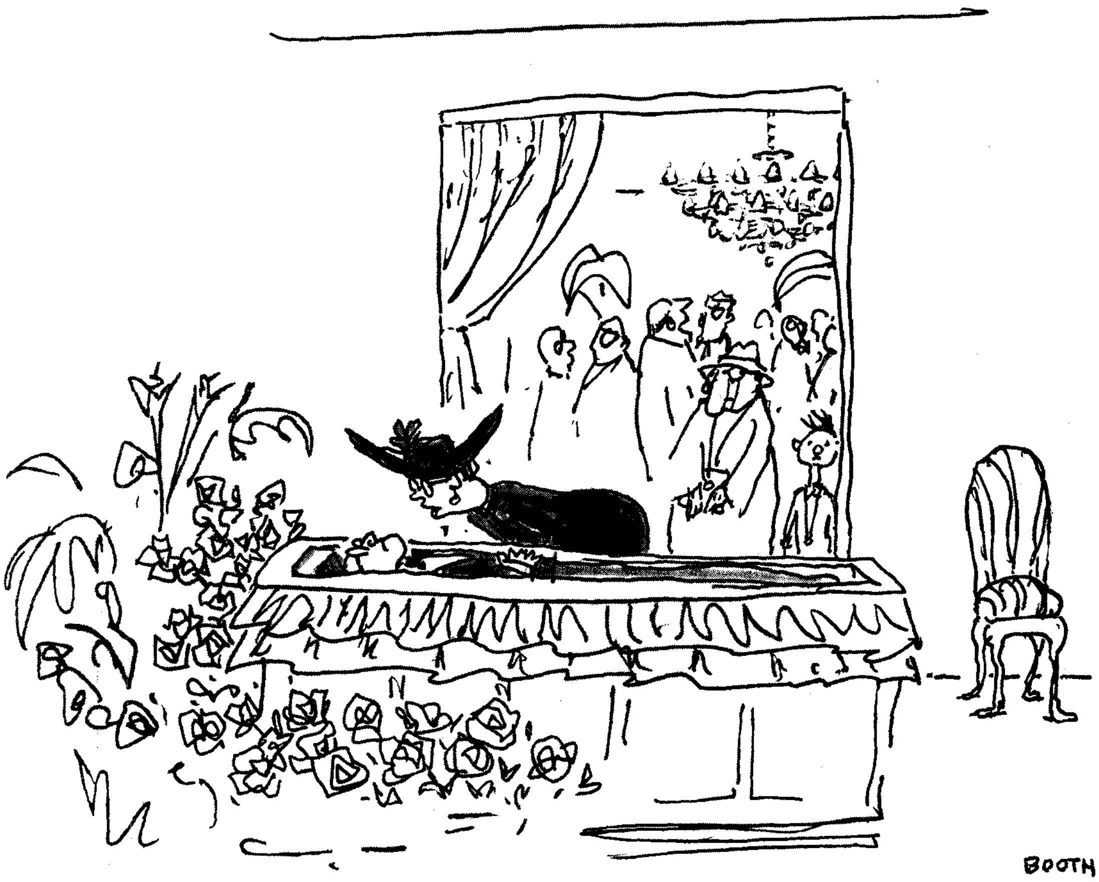
Reasons. Owen's remoteness. Time for the boy to wake up and get out of the house, show some pluck, some drive, some will power—that was always the closing arument, the clincher. But why? Owen did well in school. He was quiet and liked to read and wasn't much of an athlete, but he wasn't lazy or lacking in courage; he and his friends routinely rode their bikes up and down hills that verged on the perpendicular. And those sounds Owen made—what was the harm in them? Why shouldn't he dream up poems, or songs, or whatever they were? Why shouldn't he dream? He was a child.

Dr. Booth turned left at a fork and navigated a run of sharp turns as if he'd spent his life on this road. The haze was gone, the late-afternoon light almost painfully clear. Pumpkins gleamed in a passing field.

He had wanted Owen out of the house. That was the truth, and it made no sense to him now. The impatience he'd felt, coming upon his son reading or playing with his dog, doing nothing, dreaming—why? What was the crime? As a boy, he himself had wanted nothing more than the chance to dream. It had come seldom in that crowded, industrious house, and never lasted long. Why should he begrudge his son what he had most desired? Why should he begrudge his son his childhood?

Neat files of corn flicked past. Dr. Booth drove faster, fast as he dared, through corkscrew turns, down straightaways, over gravel fire roads and glistening blacktop, past marsh, past field, up hilltops awash in light and deep into valleys abysmal. As he drove he pondered the face of his son as if it were a map, as if he were learning where to turn from the curve of Owen's neck, the slant of an eyebrow. And then it began to fade. At first he barely noticed. The long fine line of the nose blurred subtly, that was all. Then the cheeks paled; the smile grew faint; the light dulled and died from the eyes. He fiercely studied every feature even as it ebbed away, trying to hold the ghostly image there, keep it in mind long enough to find his way back to the true face. And then it vanished, and he was lost again. He passed through a dark wood. The trees closed above him in a way that seemed protective, and when he left their embrace he slowed and pulled to the side of the road. The sun was going down over the field to his right, where a tractor moved slowly in the distance, cutting the last rows of hay.

Dr. Booth got out of the car. He crossed the road and gazed up the hill. Another field, also full of new-mown hay. The smell went to his head. He stood there a moment, then ducked through the fence and walked farther into the field. He kept staring up the hill as he climbed, looking for something. When he reached the crest he stopped. All around him the fields rolled empty away. He felt a stone under his shoe, nudged it aside, then bent to pick it up. Not a stone, after all. A button—a metal button caked with dirt. He picked at it until the brass was revealed, then examined it in the last of the light. Under the verdigris he could make out a pair of crossed swords. A military button, then. An old one. Something must have happened here, long ago—that was why he'd been drawn to this place. A battle had been fought, no quarter given; boys became men, and were lost. Wasn't that the way of it? He slipped the button in his pocket and started down the hill. ♦



"Hudson, about our reservations at the Rainbow Room for the millennium—I raffled them off."

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OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

TIGER IN THE SNOW

The legendary Amur tiger is now almost entirely confined to a remote province of eastern Russia. Why are the local people so torn about its survival? The author reports from a world without rules.

BY PETER MATTHIESSEN

In early April of 1996, I went to the zoo in Indianapolis to pay my respects to a young Amur tiger, which I found stretched gracefully on a sunny ledge, the highest and most isolated point in an outside enclosure she shares with two other Amur tigers, another young female and an adult male. She peered at me—or, rather, past me, in the cat's indifferent manner—through the slanted ellipses of gold-amber eyes. Unlike her companions—and unlike most zoo tigers—this beautiful creature was born in the wild, and, as it happened, I had recently returned from southeastern Siberia, where I had visited the alder wood on a snowy ridge on which she had been captured four years earlier, as an unweaned, orphaned cub.

According to her keepers, the young tigress remains rather shy and apprehensive around strangers, owing to the traumatic circumstances surrounding her capture; a young zoo-bred tigress, who is more gregarious, was placed in her enclosure as a "surrogate sibling," to help acclimate her to captivity and calm her down. The Siberian tigress is beautiful and healthy, at about two hundred and fifty pounds, and is exceptionally valuable because of her genes, which promise a welcome infusion of new blood into captive-tiger-breeding programs all over the country. This month, she is scheduled to be bred with a genetically suitable male from the Minnesota Zoo—one whose genes are not already widespread in American zoo populations. Her cubs would be exponentially more valuable in maintaining the small tiger population in the wild, but that is not her story.

The remote and beautiful Primorski Krai, or Maritime Province, in eastern Siberia, is best known to the outside world through an enchanting book called "Dersu the Trapper" (the source of the fine 1975 Kurosawa film "Dersu Uzala"), which filled me with yearning to travel to that remote region ever since I first read it, back in the sixties. Its author, V. K. Arseniev, was a young Russian Army geographer, ethnographer, and naturalist who between 1902 and 1907 made three expeditions on horse and on foot to map the still unknown Maritime Province; his guide was Dersu, a local hunter, who had survived a terrible mauling by a tiger. Known to the local Chinese as Hu Lin, the King, and to the Tungus tribes as Amba, Protector of the Forest, the tiger pervades Arseniev's accounts. To indigenous people such as Dersu, it was the very spirit of the great Old World forest known as the taiga.

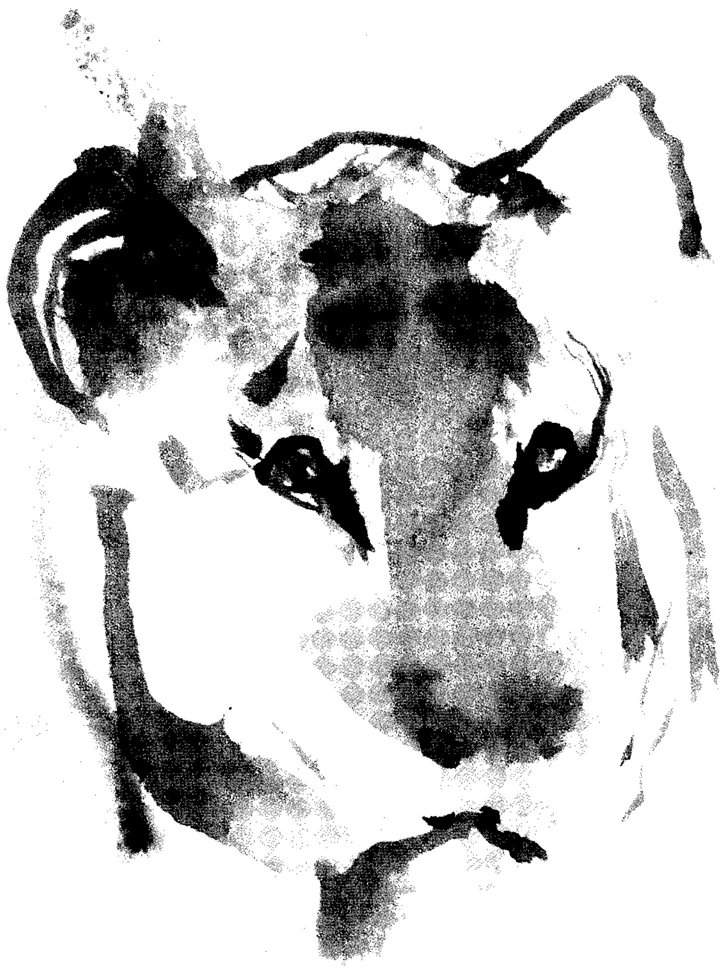
In late June of 1992, I made my first visit to Primorski Krai, which curves south along the Sea of Japan like a great claw to its borders with northeastern China and North Korea. My destination was the Sikhote-Alin International Biosphere Reserve, the largest wildlife sanctuary in the Far East, consisting of a thousand three hundred and fifty square miles of forested mountains, clear silver torrents, and unbroken coast. Here the brown bear and lynx, wolf and salmon of the north share their range with the tiger and leopard and subtropical flycatchers in a remarkable faunal region, unlike any other wilderness on earth.

The Sikhote-Alin Mountains are the last stronghold of *Panthera tigris altaica*, the so-called Siberian, or Manchurian, tiger, which as recently as the last century was common not only in Siberia but throughout northeastern China and the Korean Peninsula, and ranged west perhaps as far as Mongolia and Lake Baikal. Yet the heart of the tiger's range has always been the watershed of the mighty Amur River and its main tributary, the Ussuri, which form the eastern boundary of Russia and China. Known more precisely as the Amur tiger, it resembles the Indian, or Bengal, race in its general aspect, but there is more white in the striking patterns of the head and also on the underbelly, and the flame color is less intense—less fire orange than old gold. Although only slightly taller, the Amur race in its longhaired winter coat appears more massive than the Bengal—the only one of the five surviving tiger races or subspecies which compares to it in size—and captive males have approached a weight of a thousand pounds.

This largest of the earth's great cats is already effectively extinct in China and the Koreas, and the few hundred surviving in Russia were in mortal danger, when, in 1989, Russian tiger authorities and American wildlife biologists first discussed an international research program to study the ecology and range and habitat requirements of *P. t. altaica* as the basis for a comprehensive plan that would try to save it. In January of 1992, the Siberian Tiger Project was set up at Terney, a fishing port about two hundred miles northeast of Vladivostok, which is surrounded by the Sikhote-Alin Reserve. The American co-directors of the project, Dr. Maurice Hornocker and Dr. Howard Quigley, of the Hornocker Wildlife Institute, which is affiliated with the University of Idaho, were pioneers in the use of radio telemetry to conduct field studies of cougars and jaguars: after immobilizing the animal with drugs by means of a rifle-fired dart, they would take its measurements and blood samples, then fit it with a radio collar that permitted scientists to monitor the animal's movements and arrive at a better understanding of its ecology and range.

I was eager to observe field operations, but, as it happened, I arrived two days too late to witness the capture and release of a large tigress nicknamed Lena, only the second study animal caught since the project had begun. At Terney, Hornocker, a rangy, well-weathered wildlife biologist in his early sixties, and a foremost authority on the great cats, introduced me to three of his associates: a husky young American, Dr. Dale Miquelle, and two of their Russian colleagues—Igor Nikolaiev and Evgeny Smirnov—who, before the arrival of radio telemetry, had done most of their extensive research by tracking the animals on foot in winter. The researchers told me that Lena's signals were still coming from a wooded drainage area known as the Kunalaika in the southern part of the reserve, very close to the site of her capture two days earlier. Though full recovery from the immobilization drug might take two or three days, they were concerned that Lena had not recovered faster and wandered farther.

The next day, in the hope of monitoring the tiger's signals more precisely, we trekked into the forest, following a creek upstream for several miles through hardwood taiga of oak and birch, cottonwood and maple, poplar, ash, and elm, with scattered pines. On a dim old trail, all but closed by ferns, were big, raw pugmarks, or footprints. Perhaps these had been made by Lena, perhaps not. Farther on were deep-scratched trees where a tiger had sharpened its claws. Eventually, we arrived at the site where Lena had been snared—a large cottonwood where the ground was torn up all around and a strong sapling as thick as a man's arm had been snapped off clean. Lena's captors spoke with quiet awe of the terrible roars and lunging, the ferocity, with which this young female had made three swift charges on the cable of her snare before Hornocker and Nikolaiev were able to tranquillize her with two rifle-fired darts. Since then, Lena had moved less than a mile upstream. Using some rough triangulation to fix her precise location, we paused at a point estimated by Hornocker to be approximately a hundred yards from the tiger. Over the receiver came more rapid beepings, indicating that Lena was up and moving and had us located, too. She did not roar, but nobody believed that she was in a good temper. I envisioned her with her head raised and alert, her small, round white-spotted ears twitching in the greenish sunlight. In the fragmented sun shafts of the woodland, the head would be camouflaged by bold black calligraphic lines inscribed on frost-bright brows and beard and ruff, in a beautiful and terrifying mask of snow and fire.


More than a third of the wild population of the world's largest cat is thought to have been destroyed over three recent winters.

DEBORAH ROSS

In "Dersu the Trapper" Arseniev translates an inscription he had found in a Chinese joss house in Primorski Krai: "To the Lord Tiger who dwelleth in the Forest and the Mountains. In ancient days . . . he saved the state. Today his Spirit brings happiness to man." Considering the menace of the tiger, I had originally found the word "happiness" rather curious. But on that day in the Kunalaika forest while Lena observed us from her place of hiding I felt a kindled exaltation very close to what the poet Elizabeth Bishop felt when confronted with the enigma of a roadside moose:

> Why, why do we feel
> (we all feel) this sweet
> sensation of joy?

IN late summer, Dr. Hornocker wrote me to say that Lena had resumed hunting in a normal manner. Also, a third female had been snared and collared, and in October, in the northern part of the Sikhote-Alin, a fourth female and two half-grown cubs were caught, making six "marked" animals all together. More exciting still was a discovery in the next month that Lena had produced a litter of four cubs. Elated, Hornocker suggested that I pay a return visit to Primorski Krai in winter, when I might hope to see a tiger in the snow. But in November he sent the terrible news that Dale Miquelle had found Lena's radio collar slashed from her neck and tossed into the snow. Apparently, she had been killed by poachers on a road edge. Of her cubs there was no sign whatsoever.

Because Lena had been the first "marked" animal to produce a litter, and was therefore of critical importance to many aspects of the tiger study, her loss was devastating. The heartbroken and enraged Miquelle had rushed back to Terney to report what had happened. Evgeny Smirnov and the reserve director, Anatoli Astafiev, accompanied by a forest guard and a police officer, returned with him to investigate the poaching site. While they were standing on the road, Smirnov glimpsed a movement in the bushes, and a moment later four tiger cubs were seen floundering uphill

"Actually, Jim, my lawyer won't let me give advice to young people starting out."

through the snow and alders. Though Miquelle tore off in pursuit, he was unable to catch them, yet it was clear that the unweaned and famished cubs, still awaiting their mother after a week or more, had kept circling back toward the killing place. (Though only a few months old, they were already the size of bobcats.) Realizing that they would not stray far, the men had returned to Terney and organized a capture party.

The next morning, the forest guard came upon two hiding cubs. Seizing one up against his chest and shouting for help, he stumbled along in pursuit of the other. By now, Astafiev and his party had come across the third and fourth, backed into a hollow tree. They were duly extricated, with precocious roars and snarling, and the capture of the four cubs left everyone in the party either scratched or bitten. Two of the cubs died of natural causes shortly after capture, but a month later, in January, 1993, the two survivors were sent off on a five-thousand-mile journey to the United States, accompanied by Howard Quigley and his wife, Kathy, the project veterinarian. At the Omaha zoo, the cubs were placed in a captive-breeding program for endangered species, and a few months later one was transferred to Indianapolis, where the zoo staff, to commemorate her mother, named her Lena.

On January 18, 1996, when I returned to Primorski Krai, I was met at the Vladivostok airport by two of the wildlife biologists—Quigley, tall, trim-bearded, and soft-spoken, and the bearish Miquelle, now project field director. The Amur tiger, they told me, was more seriously endangered than ever. As a result of epidemic poaching, more than a third of the wild tigers were thought to have been destroyed since my last visit. Foreign enterprises—mining and timber interests in particular—had reportedly paid off officials for the right to ravage eastern Siberia. An assault on tiger country north of the reserve was under way, especially in the wild region of the Bikin River. However, neither Quigley nor Miquelle had given up hope for the tiger, or lost enthusiasm for the project. At present, they said, the Sikhote-Alin Reserve was being used as a significant part of their territory by twenty to twenty-five tigers. Most of the tigers, however, lived outside the reserve, and they had to be given protection if the Amur race was to survive. Besides helping the local government improve public education about tigers, the project was encouraging the acquisition of wild land by the reserve and the establishment of woodland corridors between the scattered sanctuaries to allow young animals dispersing from a litter to encounter other tigers all the way south from the roadless region of the Bikin River to the Lazovsky Reserve, northeast of Vladivostok.

The following morning, we flew with Anatoli Astafiev up the icebound coast to a new timber-export facility at Plastun, and from there we continued north to Terney on the coast road. Terney, a village of small wooden houses painted zinc green or faded blue, of gardens and picket fences, outhouses, and trim woodpiles, and of twisting birch-shaded mud lanes climbing uphill and inland, looked much as it had on my first visit, but its seeming tranquillity disguised some disturbing changes. In Soviet days, guns and travel, not to speak of commerce, had been severely restricted—a circumstance that helped spare the beleaguered tigers. But, with the advent of capitalism and a free market, everything had been put up for sale, including the forests and their wildlife. Soon what had been iron borders were laid wide open to international trade, and local hunters turned poachers and smugglers made the most of their opportunity to supply tiger parts for traditional medicines to the Chinas and Koreas. The mainland Chinese, in particular, were willing to pay as much as ten thousand dollars for a single tiger—more than a local man might hope to make in five years' work—and were encouraging poaching in other tiger countries, especially India and Russia. They paid well not only for the beautiful striped pelt but for "medicine bones"—sinews, organs, glands, and even whiskers, which typically are ground to powder and consumed in the hope of curing mankind's afflictions, and also of acquiring the tiger's strength and its legendary potency, which permits it to mate vigorously over several days.

THIRTEEN tigers that had been collared and released since 1992 were being monitored biweekly from the air, and one morning, as the biplane used in project surveys crisscrossed an open valley and made a slow, grinding turn over a logging road, I saw the first wild tiger of my life, bounding swiftly across open ground through two feet of powder snow and whisking out of sight beneath a great lone spruce. Alerted, the pilot circled the spruce tighter and tighter. On that first sighting, with the low winter sun glancing off the snow, all I had seen was a leaping black silhouette, an emblematic tiger. (The image evoked a Tungus belief that stalking tigers use the sun to blind their prey, by springing out of the dawn light or the sunset like a spurt of flame.) But as the plane made a turn over the treetops, the tiger abandoned the lone tree and headed for a grove of pines nearby. I glimpsed a flash of bold color in the shifting greens, then the sunlit burnt orange and golden brown of a splendid creature moving purposefully but without haste over the snow; sheltered by the trees, it did not bound or hide but advanced unhurriedly down a sparkling white corridor between the pines.

THE next day, with Quigley and Miquelle, I accompanied Anatoli Astafiev by car to the high-country logging village of Melnichnoye, where livelihoods were bound to be affected by a new western extension of the reserve.

At seven, the coast range was still locked in bitter darkness, and an hour later, though the sun had risen from the sea, the air remained transfixed by Arctic cold. At the Djigit River, a road led west over the mountains, following the southwestern boundary of the reserve in a gradual ascent into higher, colder country. Drab winter finches flitted across the white road and the ice-choked river like blown chips of bark, and a gray squirrel with handsome ear tassels cavorted up onto a snowbank and whisked down again. Twisting the bright-orange cones among white snow caps on the fir tops was a flock of crossbills, the males fire red and black, the females a flame yellow.

On the four-hour journey there were no settlements, and the only traffic on the roads were the great logging trucks bound east from Melnichnoye to Plastun. In midmorning, we crossed a high divide and headed out across Sikhote-Alin's central plateaus, where the mountain air bit at the face like an ice tiger. Elk tracks wandered everywhere among snowy firs and bone-white birches, and we chased from the roadside a young elk, woolly brown in its thick winter coat: it struggled away over a rocky knoll, up to its brisket in the snow. Farther on, Astafiev pointed with pride at mountain landmarks of the new reserve addition. Soon the road crossed the Kolumbey River, which traverses a high plain before descending west to the Ussuri.

When Arseniev rode through here almost a century ago, Melnichnoye (then called Tsidatun, which is Chinese for "windy valley") was a settlement of native Udege, a Tungus people. The community's head forester, Nikolai Kosichko, an iron-haired man with melancholy eyes who welcomed us into his small house at the west end of town, told us that until 1971 the scattering of peasant cottages and sheds had remained "a pure forest village, and everybody was a hunter and trapper, with scarcely a hundred and fifty people all together." Then logging arrived, at that time a state-run enterprise but now taken over by a private timber company. By 1985, the village population had become five times its former size, and today it shelters about a thousand souls.

"Most of our timber is shipped out through Plastun, and almost nothing comes back into our community," Kosichko said. "We are supposed to receive thirty per cent of any profit, but the federal government takes eighty per cent and local officials take the other twenty. We can't expect help from those officials, who have plenty of problems of their own—that is to say, no money."

As we talked, men and women came in to hear the conversation. A forest guard named Vladimir Sharov, a handsome man in a green camouflage uniform who had bushy eyebrows, sideburns, and a black beard that gave him a slight resemblance to Fidel Castro, said that local sentiment ran strongly against the reserve and its new extension, and against him, as a consequence. Saying this, he offered a fine metallic smile. "Life is very different now," he said. "It's not just the economy. People are all living for the moment, and looking out only for themselves. Our life is out of control—it's chaos." This refrain is heard repeatedly in the new Russia. Before their world changed, there was an environmental-education program in the village, and tree planting, too, the guard recalled. "That's all gone now. Before, the people volun-

STEAKS, MARTINIS & CIGARS
"YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?"
Lorenz

teered to help, out of enthusiasm. Today, nobody will lift a finger except for money."

"If the Japanese ask for our Korean pine, we cut our pine, and if the Chinese want tiger bones we shoot our tigers," Kosichko said ironically. "It's not our fault!" And Sharov's wife, Nina, cried in laughter and regret, "We have a democracy in Russia now! No rules at all!"

Miquelle had told me that tigers in Primorski Krai take about one human life each year, a fact that lends a certain edge to walking in the taiga. Last year, he said, a Melnichnoye trapper named Sergei Denisov was killed in the forest by a tiger, leaving a widow and two children. No, he had not made a mistake, said Sharov, who had been the dead man's friend. "There is a critical distance with a tiger. He walked within it—that was that. Sergei did not intend to harm the tiger, therefore he made no mistake." Anyway, he was not Melnichnoye's first and only tiger victim. In 1958—the villagers consulted on this date—the head of the local weather station had been taken.

In Dersu's time, the tiger was revered as "the True Spirit of the Mountains," a wilderness god and the protector of the precious ginseng root from mankind. The word *amba* is no longer used, nor have the villagers retained any Udege myths about the forest. "We have the Russian outlook now," Kosichko said.

When I asked if there was any feeling that the community would be better off if the last tigers were exterminated, the villagers gave a heartfelt groan of assent. But almost immediately Sharov protested that the reserve would be "boring" without tigers, and Kosichko's assistant, Sergei Zinoviev, a balding, bearded man with a sly humor, strongly agreed, but he granted that fewer tigers might be better, since the game animals they killed were needed by the community. "For me," he asserted, "life is more interesting with tigers around, but most people here would never miss them." Even the women present discounted any threat to village life, although ten years earlier—the same hard winter during which a tiger was killed at a Vladivostok trolley station—a tiger had entered the dirt lanes between rows of cottages, killed a dog, and mauled a colt. As for the reserve, Zinoviev said, local gatherers of ginseng and other wild foods walked the forest all summer without guns. A man should not go there if he was afraid.

Nowadays, I was informed, the fine for shooting a tiger was a million rubles, or two hundred times the state minimum salary, and half of that again was the fine for selling tiger parts. However, a man would not be sent to prison for failure to pay the fine; he would only have most of his belongings confiscated.

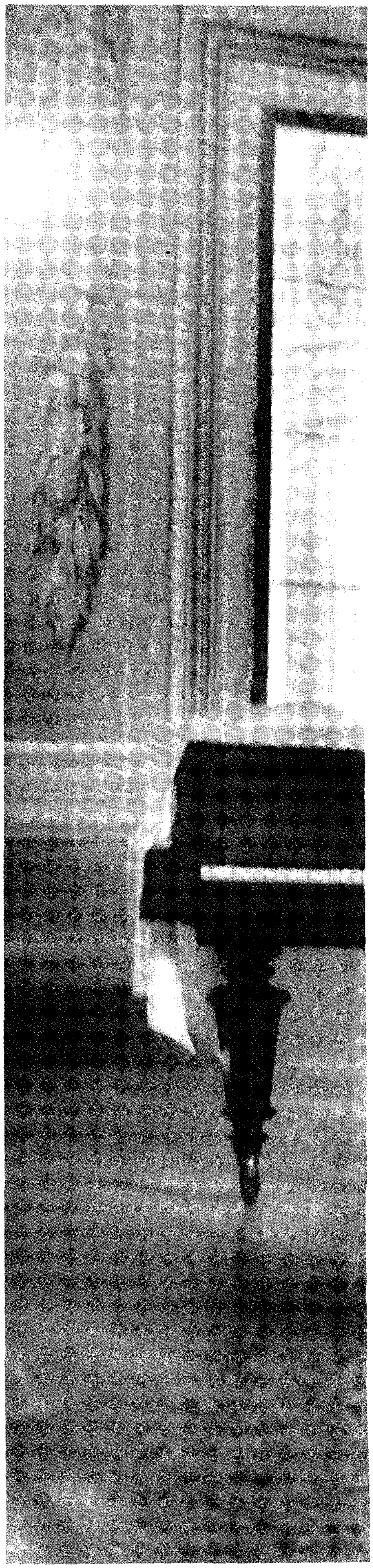
"If you're going to save tigers, you have to have stiffer penalties or provide a better life," Zinoviev said. "If people could make a decent living, they would not shoot tigers." These days, he went on to say, the tiger was poached less often for its hide and bones, because the trade in tiger parts was being closed down by the anti-poaching patrol on the Plastun road—formerly a favorite haunt of gun traders and hunters—and by replacement of corrupt customs officials on the borders. He then astonished us by adding that tigers were sometimes killed these days for food. "A third of the people here have eaten tiger, though they might not admit it," he said. He pointed toward a ridge north of the village. "A tiger used to travel along that hillside. Somebody saw him every year. But we don't see him anymore, because we ate him." Tiger meat was like pork, he said, but leaner, lighter. "Want to try some?" he asked, and everybody laughed.

Later, I asked Astafiev if this sly fellow was fooling us. Astafiev shook his head. Maybe Zinoviev had exaggerated—tiger was not to everybody's taste—but,

CIAO, MARCELLO

Marcello Mastroianni, who died on December 19th, was an anomaly—a legendary actor who gently spoofed his own legend. In such films as Fellini's "La Dolce Vita" (1960) and "8½" (1963), he set the mold of the Latin lover only to break it, imbuing his devilishly handsome protagonists with hidden reserves of vulnerability, pain, and humor. "I like to disparage this idea of the artist," he said last summer. "We actors are craftsmen. We are birds—though not with eagles' wings." Pictured here outside Rome in 1986, on the set of Nikita Mikhalkov's "Dark Eyes," he is clowning in a carefree moment, radiating insouciant warmth. He may not have had eagle's wings, but he had buoyancy enough to soar.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
FRANÇOIS-MARIE BANIER



©1996, FROM THE BOOK "PAST PRESENT"

yes, some people ate tiger, that was true.

When the meeting broke up, Sharov led us to the house of the late Sergei Denisov's hunting partner, a woolly-headed young man with a muffled voice, introduced as Sasha. He described how he and Denisov and Denisov's brother-in-law Sergei Polishuk had been hunting and trapping on a tributary of the Kolumbey River. On the fourteenth of February in 1995, Denisov, who had gone upstream to check his sable traps, failed to return. On the sixteenth, Polishuk went to look for him, and that same day Sharov came through on his patrol, staying overnight in the trappers' cabin. Returning on the seventeenth, Polishuk told them that all he'd found were a pair of legs and a few red traces in the snow, surrounded by the pugmarks of a tigress. A few days later, the tiger researcher Igor Nikolaiev came to investigate, accompanied by Dale Miquelle. Though the original tracks were by then quite old, and had been obscured by light fresh snow and also by the tracks of a second tiger, Nikolaiev went to work with a spruce whisk, uncovering sign. He soon concluded that the man-eater had been half starved, for not only had she attacked a man but the whitish color of her scat denoted an animal that had eaten insufficiently for a long time. The tigress had lain in a sheltered bed under the base of a fallen tree and had gathered herself for an attack when she heard something coming. Had Denisov seen the tigress, he would probably have stood his ground and shouted aggressively, and perhaps fired off his gun, and in all likelihood this would have saved his life, but to the end he remained unaware of her, to judge from the absence of any signs of flight or struggle. The chances are that, except for one blow of wild pain and terror in the impact, he never realized that his life was ending.

Denisov's hunting partner nurtured no resentment against the reserve and its new addition—"Let it stay," he said. Nor did he express either fear or bitterness about the presence of the tigers. He shrugged, fatalistic. "Let them be," he said. As far as he knew, Denisov's brother-in-law felt the same way, for on this frozen day in the high mountains Sergei Polishuk was "out in the forest," where he belonged.

BEFORE leaving Melnichnoye, we enjoyed a fine elk feast, prepared by the local women, then returned to Terney, arriving about midnight. The following day, in the afternoon, we stopped again on the icebound empty road where Lena's collar had been found—not to commemorate Lena but because a tigress, Katia, which had taken over Lena's territory two years earlier and was thought to have cubs, had adopted Lena's troubling habit of hiding her litter in a den east of the road and crossing the road to hunt in the Kunalaika. Not fifty yards from where Lena had been killed—and this seemed eerie—we found Katia's tracks in the deep snow where she had come down the ridge and crossed the road to make her way to the elk bottoms. Her radio signal—a pulsing beat, like the hard chipping of a bird, or like the rubbing of two stones together—was loud and fast, but that might mean only that her collar was rubbing on a frozen kill.

To verify the existence of the litter, we wanted to check the tiger tracks around the kill. While Katia was present we could not go down there, for the sake of the tiger and her cubs as well as for our own sake. But that same evening, toward dusk, according to a reserve assistant, Alyosha Kostnya, Katia recrossed the road and climbed the eastern ridge, apparently on her way back to her litter. (As it turned out, she had just one cub, and she brought it across the road a few days later.) The following day, her signal, still coming from the east, indicated that she was resting, which is usual in the middle of the day, and so we descended through the hillside woods to find her kill.

The snow in the woods was two feet deep and fluffy with dry cold. In the deep frost, a pea-green moth cocoon suspended from a twig was the solitary note of green. In the bottoms we followed the smooth white surface of the Kunalaika, which in this place might have been forty feet across. On the river ice, the snow left by the wind was light, and Katia's pugmarks were sharp, as if incised in steel. In one place, the tigress had lain down and stretched, leaving a ghostly outline of the True Spirit of the Mountains, even to the great head and long tail, the leg crook, and the big, floppy paws—so clear that one could almost see the stripes.

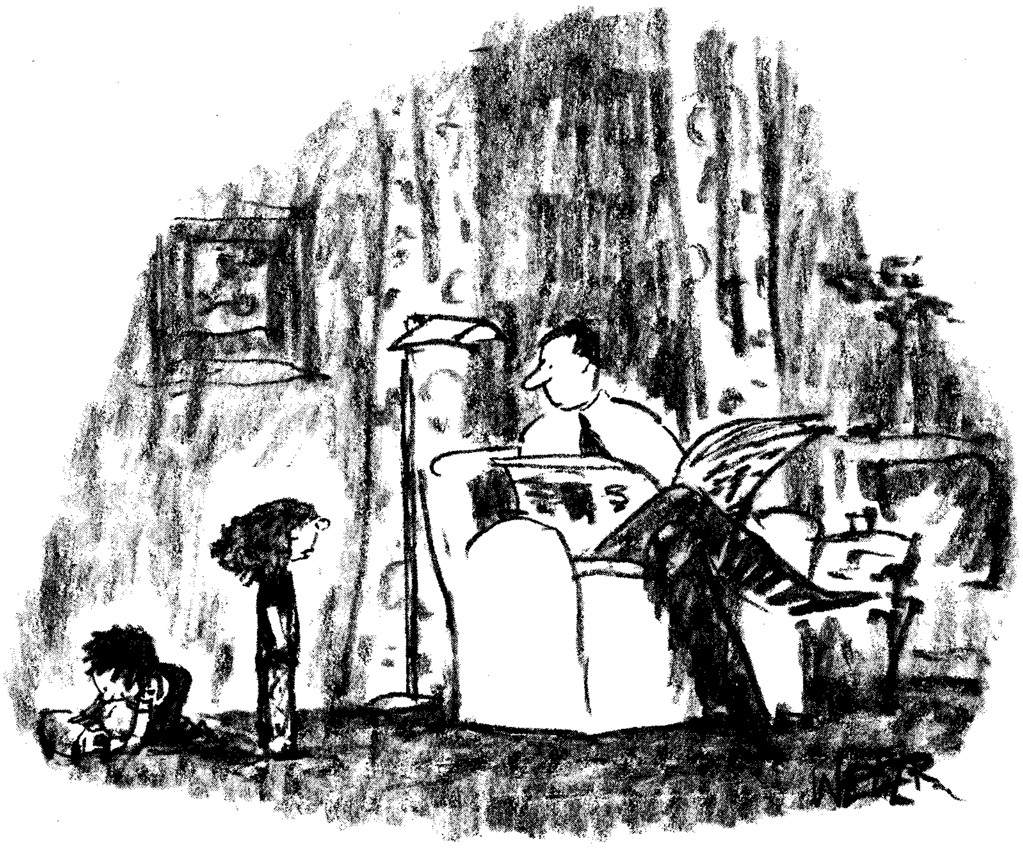
Her ambush site was a river island of small, bent black saplings against snow—uncanny camouflage for the white accents of her mask and her vertical black markings. Not far away, the heart-shaped prints of a young elk broke the ice glaze on an oxbow off the river, and from the snow evidence we were able to reconstruct what had happened. The foreprints came together where the elk stopped short, in a place of elms and cottonwoods, some seventy yards from the crouched tiger. Perhaps the elk listened, sniffed, and trembled for a moment, big dark eyes round. From this taut point, it suddenly sprang sidewise, attaining the far bank in one scared bound, as the tigress launched herself from hiding and cut across her quarry's route in ten-foot leaps, leaving silent round explosions in the snow. Shooting through the dark riverine trees like a tongue of fire, she overtook the big deer and hauled it down in a wood of birch and poplar about thirty-seven yards (Miquelle paced it off) from where she'd started. Striking from behind, she'd grasped the throat, to suffocate her prey, for there was little blood—only the arcs of a bony elk leg sweeping weakly on the surface of the snow, and a last, sad spasm of the creature's urine.

With logging trucks howling past perhaps sixty yards up the steep slope, this wood was much too close to the road. The tigress had dragged the elk some ninety yards farther back, across the oxbow and the swamp island to the western bank, where she had lain in hiding. And seeing the smooth drag mark, with its spots of blood, one unwillingly imagined the similar track left by the body of poor Sergei Denisov, who must have been close to the size and weight of this young carcass, with the same astonishment in his wide eyes.

The elk's carcass was dropped beneath a thick-trunked alder with dry catkins. Here the tigress fed before moving the elk to a wiry thicket at the edge of a swampy meadow.

Of the elk, all that remained were the legs, the head, and the stiff, coarse hide, which are usually abandoned by the tiger. There was no meat left on the twisted carcass. The eyes were frozen to blue ice, too hard even for ravens.

Nearby, along the dragging track, were the tigress's redoubtable defecations, and Miquelle, delighted by what he called the clearest and most classic kill among a hundred-odd that he had seen, pointed out that she had hardly left her lair except to go relieve herself, which was why no detail of this ambush, kill, or feeding was obscured. "Can you imagine," he exclaimed, "what this place would look like if a human hunter had lived here for four days, coming and going!" Having seen this clear place in the winter forest, I understood much better how the Russian researchers, before the advent of radio telemetry here in Primorski Krai, had learned so much about *P. t. altaica* by reading the signs of life and death in the winter taiga.



"How come Jasper's mutual fund is up twelve per cent and mine's up only eight?"

At the end of January, in Vladivostok, we dined at the apartment of a project consultant, Dr. Dimitri Pikunov, who told us that on January 22nd—the same bitter-cold day we heard the tale of Sergei Denisov at Melnichnoye—a tiger had attacked and mauled a woman who was following her husband through the forest toward a rural train station outside the town of Partizansk, northeast of Vladivostok, then had turned and killed the courageous man when he ran up and struck it with a flashlight, yelling at his wife to make a run for it. Several hours later, after it had fed on the man's entrails and rib cage, the tiger—a male—was tracked and killed by hunters and militia.

A month later, returning home to the United States, I found a letter from Dale Miquelle, who said that after my departure there had been reports of two other human deaths caused by tigers. Unlike the attacks near Melnichnoye and Partizansk, which were apparently unprovoked, "all evidence indicated that hunters had stalked and fired at these tigers, which then turned and killed them." In one case, the tiger did not even bite the poacher but simply swatted him to the ground and ran away; apparently the man died of shock and cold. Four human fatalities in just over a year was unusually high in this sparsely populated region. Though one might argue that the poaching of hoofed animals, which the tiger requires for survival, was a critical factor in these cases, the shooting of game was unlikely to stop in this era of hard times in the new Russia. Human needs come first, and I feared that the human mortalities would inevitably lead to widespread condemnation of the tiger.

In February, Pikunov and Miquelle had organized the most comprehensive tiger census ever made, involving some six hundred trackers. After months of analysis of the data, the results were announced: the tiger population was estimated at three hundred and fifty adults—give or take twenty or thirty—accompanied by a hundred and one subadults. This was at the high end of projections, and Howard Quigley, who conveyed the results to me, was elated. "The tigers took an awful hammering in the early nineties," he said, "but, given a little breathing room, tigers know how to survive."

In arguing for protective measures on behalf of the tiger, one could cite the critical importance of biodiversity and the interdependence of all life. Quigley points out, for example, how many attributes of the tiger's prey species—the astonishing alertness, keen senses, speed, and strength of the deer and the wild boar—might never have evolved without the tensions imposed on their ecology by this great predator. But, in the end, these abstractions seem less vital than our humane instinct that the spiritual and mythic resonance of a creature as splendid as any on our earth can only be removed from man's environment at a terrible cost.

One cannot speak for those who live in tiger country, but, for my part, the spirit and the mystery of Hu Lin the King—merely knowing that His Lordship is there twitching his white brows in the snowing taiga—bring me deep happiness. That winter afternoon in the Kunalaika, the low sunlight in the south glancing off black silhouetted ridges and shattered into frozen blades by the black trees, the ringing clarity of the cat tracks on the ice, the blood trace and stark signs of the elk's passage—that was pure joy. As Howard Quigley once observed, "Life would be less without the tiger." ♦

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BOOKS

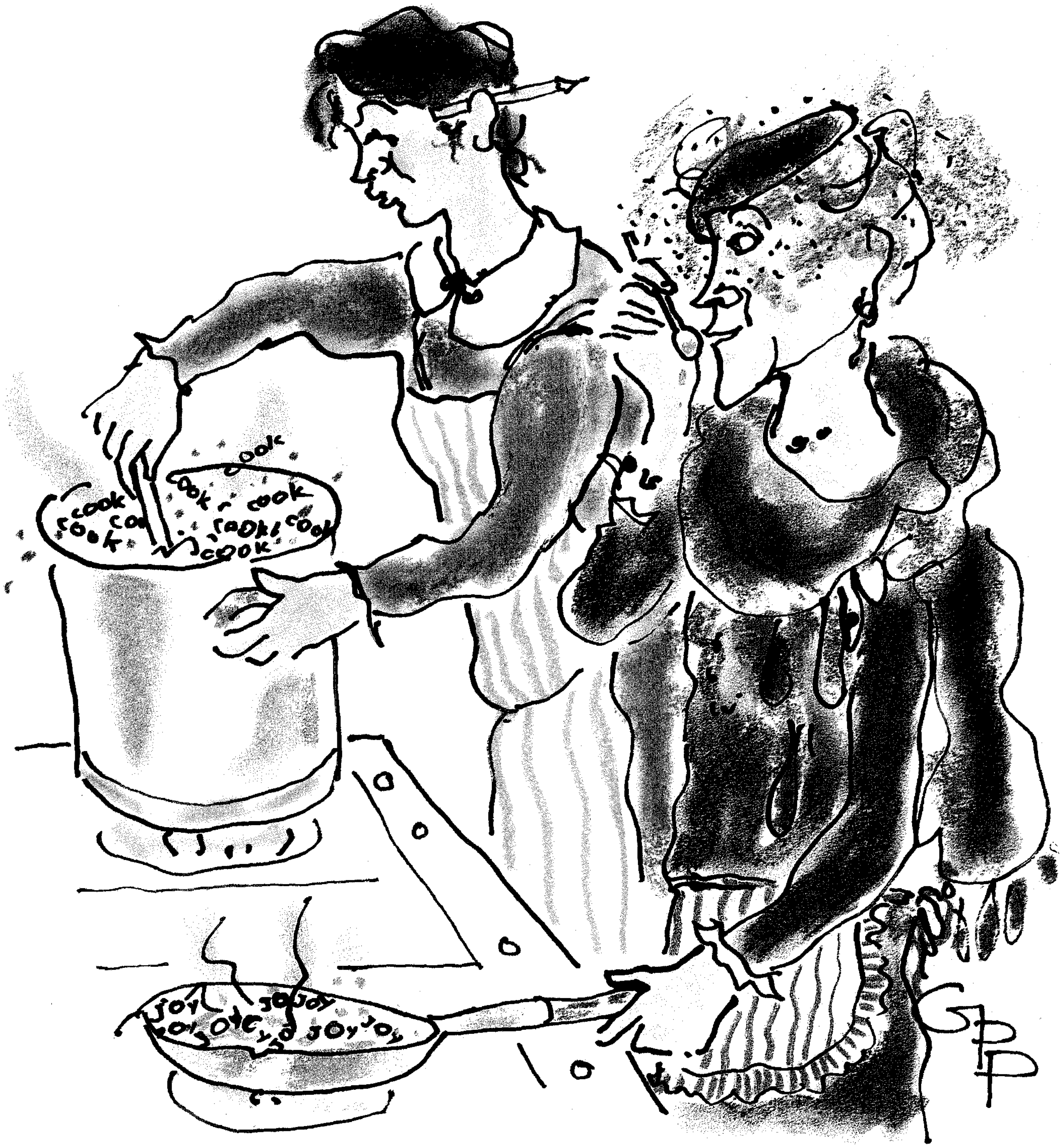
GOOD DISH

The unlikely women behind "The Joy of Cooking."

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

LET me make one thing perfectly clear: I am not a cook. That's one of the reasons I would never be without "The Joy of Cooking": I can turn to it when I make a foray into the unknown (anything beyond roast chicken or chocolate-chip cookies, that is), and it will give me, without condescension, basic information and the techniques for using it. And, possibly best of all, it isn't scary. It's probably the friendliest cookbook ever written. ("Not every householder has to worry about what to do with leftover champagne, but should this appalling dilemma be yours, there is no better way than this to solve it. . . .") Its status as a classic has been indisputable for at least forty years, and even people who don't use its recipes would probably not quarrel with its designation as the Bible of cookbooks. But I must confess that, in the same way I'd never thought about pencils until Henry Petroski's book "The Pencil" came out, in 1990, I'd never thought about "Joy" and its two authors, Irma S. Rombauer and her daughter, Marion Rombauer Becker, until I came across Anne Mendelson's "Stand Facing the Stove: The Story of the Women Who Gave America 'The Joy of Cooking'" (Holt; $29.95). "Joy" was just always there; my mother has one, I have one, every woman I know has one (and so do most of the men). Reading Mendelson's lively book has the same effect on the imagination as seeing pictures of your grandmother when she was young: you'd taken it for granted that she had always been your grandmother, and suddenly you realize that she has a past, and you look at her in a whole new way. "Stand Facing the Stove," which could so easily have turned out to be merely a curiosity, is, in addition to being an entertaining double biography of a mother and daughter, a detailed social history that opens up to offer a broad view of twentieth-century America. Mendelson is excellent on the social mores of the Midwest and on the way changes in technology have affected how we eat and cook: her discussion of sugar refining makes the subject seem as consequential in its own way as the advent of railroads in the West. And Mendelson, a cookbook authority and the book reviewer for *Gourmet*, is witty, too. Her book's anthemic title, which turns out to be a drollery from the pages of "Joy," is itself a droll acknowledgment of the cookbook's charm: "We are told that a hard-boiled professional cook, when asked what she regarded as primary briefing for a beginner, tersely replied: 'Stand facing the stove.' "

IN almost all respects, the eventual triumph of "Joy" was unlikely; in fact, its very existence was unlikely. Irma Rombauer was born in 1877, and, except for a few years spent abroad, grew up in the heart of the German community of St. Louis—an active, progressive, and solidly upper-middle-class group, in which her father, Max von Starkloff, an eminent doctor who was also involved in local politics, was a leading figure. Not much was expected of girls of her class except that they marry and that they be pleasing. Mendelson describes Irma as "small and neatly made, with a great flair for wearing clothes and in general making herself interesting to others, especially men," and says, "She met people with a lovely, rather capricious sprightliness of manner that masked some sort of dimly felt ambition or discontent." Irma once wrote that by the age of eleven or twelve her life "was never lacking in masculine companionship." (She often visited relatives in Indianapolis, and in the eighteen-nineties had a brief romance there with the then unknown Booth Tarkington.) Mendelson notes that Irma would probably have gone to college if she had been born just ten years later, and that by the time she



Irma Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker. No one knows why Irma decided to write a cookbook, but everyone agreed that it was a terrible idea.

GLADYS PERINT PALMER

had become a "competitive young matron" she would regret her lack of academic training. And yet, as Mendelson points out, hinting at the possibilities that sometimes blew open to a woman once her traditional wifely and maternal duties were dispatched, "the leisurely, higgledy-piggledy education she did receive was the sort that an agile mind can make much of in later years."

Two weeks before Irma's twenty-second birthday, she married Edgar Rombauer, a lawyer, whose family was also prominent in St. Louis civic affairs but who never quite reached the kind of success that Irma wanted for him. Throughout his adult life, Edgar suffered recurrent nervous breakdowns, and in 1930, when Irma was fifty-two, he killed himself with a shotgun. Mendelson says that the marriage was "stormy," which in this case appears to mean simply "bad": Irma seemed in every way liberated by his death. In any event, she now had no choice but to put her agile mind to some profitable use.

Nobody knows exactly why Irma decided to write a cookbook, but everyone of her acquaintance, including her family, agreed that it was a terrible idea, because everyone agreed that Irma Rombauer wasn't a very good cook. Her strengths were social, not culinary or domestic. Marion, who was born in 1903, remembers being alone much of the time as a child while her mother poured herself into social activities; and Irma's dinners were better known for the conversations that took place at them than for the food she served. But Irma forged ahead. The book went from conception to completion in less than two years, and in November, 1931, three thousand copies of "Joy" were delivered into her hands. (She had had the book privately printed, using half of the money that Edgar had left her.) It bore the subtitle "A Compilation of Reliable Recipes with a Casual Culinary Chat"; that casual, chatty quality, along with Marion's whimsical silhouette drawings—her main contribution until she became her mother's collaborator, in the late forties—linked it with the amateur cookbooks that are still produced by local women's groups around the country. Indeed, Irma had mined the groups she belonged to for many of her recipes.

Irma, it turned out, was a natural, fluent writer, and although "the personality on the page resembled the Irma Rombauer of family memory rather as a kitten resembles a Bengal tiger," she had a nimble sense of humor:

> In Switzerland we had a vile tempered cook named Marguerite. Her one idea, after being generally disagreeable, was to earn enough to own a small chalet on some high peak where she could cater to mountain climbers. While she was certainly not born with a silver spoon in her mouth—although it was large enough to accommodate several—I am convinced she arrived with a cooking spoon in her hand. If she has attained her ideal, many a climber will feel it worth while to scale a perilous peak to reach her kitchen. The following Cheese Custard Pie was always served in solitary state. Its flavor varied with Marguerite's moods and her supply of cheese.

And Irma was not afraid to admit that she was only human: "I have tried any number of pound cakes . . . and they have all had an objectionable solidity. If I have failed through ignorance, I shall be grateful to someone for enlightenment." This voice is what set "Joy" apart from the stolid cookbooks that had reigned for decades, "The Settlement Cookbook" and "The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book" (once colloquially and now officially known as "The Fannie Farmer Cookbook"). The first "Joy" 's embrace of convenience foods like canned soup also appealed to the young women of the day, for—unlike the generations before them, who had spent much of their time preparing food with other women and so understood cooking in their bones—they often found themselves alone and clueless in the kitchen. They were not so different from the author herself, who had entered marriage with skills that were useful mainly in the parlor; she later said that her husband, who was an avid camper, had taught her to cook.

IRMA, a good salesman, had little trouble distributing "Joy" on her own, but when she found a bona-fide publisher, in 1935, her book became a potential major-leaguer. It was a new beginning for the book, and it was also the beginning of a writer-publisher relationship of such relentless acrimony as to be almost mythic. In one corner was Irma, and in the other was Bobbs-Merrill, an old Indianapolis firm then led by D. Laurance Chambers, an editor who was both respected and hated, and who got Irma to agree to a contract that assigned to Bobbs-Merrill the copyright not only of the new, 1936 edition but also of the original, 1931 edition. At this point in Irma's story, you can almost see, as in old cartoons, large numbers of winged dollar bills flying away. In the future, she had good lawyers, who helped contain the damage that the lack of legal counsel had caused at this crucial moment, but Chambers's poisoned welcome set the tone for all of Irma's—and, later, Marion's—dealings with the firm.

By looking at "Joy" as a nuts-and-bolts commercial entity—we hear about contracts, paper supplies, the cost of making changes at the last minute—Mendelson shows us in a concrete way that there were two sides to the ugly story. She seems to have achieved fairness, even though, she writes, "from what remained of this once great firm I received no coöperation whatever." (Bobbs-Merrill, which was bought by Macmillan in 1985, no longer exists; Simon & Schuster now publishes "Joy," under its Scribner imprint.) She has so thoroughly excavated the history of each edition of "Joy" that it is perhaps inevitable that there are a few too many war stories, with a few too many names and numbers. These passages make the book slightly less readable but no less valuable—it's as good an illustration as I've ever seen of the pugilistic publishing industry, and of what can happen when a stubborn amateur crosses swords with a professional bully.

GIVEN all the unexpected paradoxes in the story of "Joy," it shouldn't be surprising that the relationship between the woman who lit its flame and the woman who carried the increasingly heavy torch was not a particularly happy one. Irma seems to have charmed legions outside her family while constantly stepping on the feelings of her daughter, whose appearance she found it necessary to criticize well into Marion's adulthood. And their personalities didn't mesh: where Irma was spontaneous and charismatic, Marion was earnest and subdued. But, just as Irma had been liberated by the death of her husband, Marion was liberated by her marriage, to an architect named John Becker, and by settling in Cincinnati, some three hundred miles away from home. She was of the generation that now had mainstream channels in which to deploy its energies and talents: she went to Vassar, and she held several paying jobs. As she grew older, she became a noted organic gardener and an ecological pioneer. Thanks to her, the nutritional information in "Joy" became increasingly sound. The days of Stuffed Apricots, which called for dried apricots, syrup, marshmallows, and sugar, were gone. As other cookbooks moved to include shortcuts, Marion's contribution—and it was a contribution, though she has been criticized for denaturing her mother's let's-whip-something-up spirit—was to follow her own yen for real, fresh ingredients.

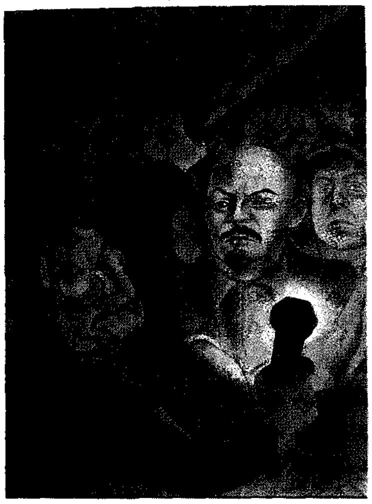
Ultimately, there was nowhere Marion could go to escape her mother's shadow. To make matters worse, her relationship with Bobbs-Merrill was even more fraught than her mother's, and is perhaps best exemplified by the humiliating shock that was delivered to her at her mother's funeral, in 1962, when someone innocently mentioned that she'd seen a new "Joy" in a bookstore that day—an unauthorized, half-baked edition, brought out behind Marion's back. Over the last twenty-five years of her life, she had to cope with her mother's long illness (during which Irma became acutely abusive), her own breast cancer, and, in 1974, her husband's illness and death. She heroically made it through a 1975 edition, and she died the next year. Sadly, Marion contributed a sour note of her own to her final years: when the paperback rights to "Joy" were sold, in 1973, for a million and a half dollars—a record price—her father's secretary, Mazie Whyte Hartrich, who had been indispensable to Irma's work, sued for a share of the money. Irma, though she had no legal obligation to do so, had always seen to it that Mazie got her fair share whenever there was a share to be divided. Marion had stopped that practice, and though she settled this case out of court, her balkiness earned her further unfavorable comparisons with her flighty but generous mother.

It has now been two decades since the last edition of "Joy." Mendelson reports that a new edition will come out this fall, and that it will be prepared with the coöperation of Marion's son Ethan, whose background includes a stint at the Cordon Bleu. Mendelson says that the new edition will include "contributions by a large assemblage of well-known food writers." The devil-may-care Irma, it appears, will be supplanted by an army of sophisticated foodies. A sneak preview, in the form of a small volume of Christmas-cookie recipes, has just been published, and it has a newly self-conscious, cloying folksiness. (It also has color photographs—*yuck*, as they say in food circles.) Its tone has become homogenized, and its remaining Irma-esque eccentricities—the things that gave it life—have largely been boiled off. It's too early to tell, but it may be that the new edition of this hardy American perennial will come to be known as "The Cooking of 'Joy.' " ♦

THE LIMITS OF NOBLESSE

Volume I on the original Rockefeller Republican.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



Nelson Rockefeller, public servant.

COURTESY OF FORBES MAGAZINE COLLECTION

WHEN Colin Powell resolved the mystery of his political leanings by identifying himself as a "Rockefeller Republican," even his friends and boosters must have cringed. The phrase seemed not merely quaint but oxymoronic—indeed, self-cancelling. "I'm a vegetarian with a taste for headcheese," the General might have said, or: "I am never, ever going to be nominated by a party run by pro-lifers and gun nuts." For on this score conventional wisdom is, amazingly, correct. As a force in the national Party, the liberal Republican is finished, kaput, dead as a doornail, dead as (for that matter) Nelson Rockefeller, about whom a new biography has just been published. Cary Reich's "The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer 1908-1958" (Doubleday; $35) closes with Rockefeller's first election to the governorship of New York, but it offers clues to the demise of the Republicans who once bore his name.

For more than twenty years following the Second World War, the Party was theirs. Internationalist in foreign affairs, progressive in economic matters, bipartisan in practical politics, the Rockefeller Republicans could trace their lineage back to the original candidates of Wall Street—Wendell Willkie and Thomas E. Dewey. In 1952, they forestalled the insurgency of Robert Taft's Babbitts by recruiting the war hero Dwight Eisenhower. They became known as Rockefeller Republicans owing not only to the pleasing alliteration but also to the fact that Nelson was their Platonic ideal—the liberal Republican reduced to the essential qualities. He had the horsy self-assurance, the view of public service as a class obligation, the disdain for the Party's ideological base. And pots of inherited money.

Vast wealth was, of course, the incontrovertible condition of Nelson Rockefeller's life. By Reich's reckoning, in the early years of this century the family fortune stood at fourteen billion dollars (measured in today's currency). Nelson never apologized for being rich—this seeming insouciance was part of his appeal—but the family had begun

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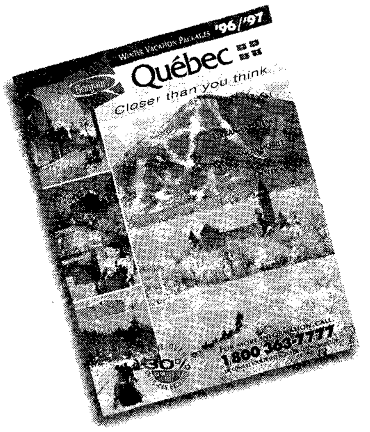

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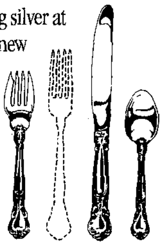

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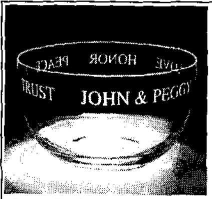

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apologizing for it, in deeds if not words, before Nelson was in knee pants. Enlightened opinion saw the original John D. as an oil baron, an exploiter of the powerless, red in fang and claw. In his shadow, John D., Jr., who was Nelson's father, came down with one of the first—and most severe—cases of liberal guilt in American history, and, as the virus spread among the moneyed class (the Roosevelts had caught it, too), it transformed the nation's politics and culture. The Rockefellers' philanthropic enterprises grew almost as numerous and various as their commercial holdings. In the span of two decades, the family name evolved from a shorthand for bloodsucking capitalism into a watchword of enlightened progressivism.

Nelson was steeped in it. John D., Jr., sent him to the Lincoln School, in Manhattan, an experimental prep school backed by the family's money, where rote learning was shunned and grades were discouraged. At home, amid unimaginable luxury, the Rockefeller boys were raised in a curious ethic of self-denial. They learned to mend their own clothes, to shine their own shoes. Weekly allowances were tight and were strictly accounted for. Young Nelson bred rabbits to earn extra cash, and sometimes cadged money from the help. And along with the self-denial in the early years came a towering sense of obligation. "The world needs fine men," his mother wrote him when he was thirteen, "there is great work waiting to be done. I want you to train yourself to meet any opportunity the future may hold." To be a Rockefeller was to be a servant of the public good—a servant with servants of his own.

Nelson conquered the self-denial without much trouble: he became an unrepentant philanderer and a spendthrift collector of art, houses, cars, and boats. But his interest in public service, broadly defined, never flagged. With more money than one man could spend, and with the family's power attenuated into more enterprises than one man could control, Nelson sought public service as a way to imprint himself on the larger world. He midwifed the Museum of Modern Art—still his greatest monument—and tinkered with various philanthropic schemes in Latin America, a region for which he maintained a lifelong passion. F.D.R. brought him into the White House shortly before the war to help woo the Latins away from the Axis powers, and he was in and out of the executive branch until he first ran for governor, in 1958.

ROCKEFELLER approached his public tasks always in a spirit of noblesse oblige. Admirable though it may be in intent, as a guide for action noblesse oblige has serious shortcomings. It tells the young nobleman that he must do something but not what he must do, and the result can be an almost comic boneheadedness. Reich recounts in delicious detail one of Nelson's earliest lunges toward public life. As the family aesthete, he took it upon himself in 1932 to recruit artists to ennoble the then unfinished Rockefeller Center, and for its crowning work, a large lobby mural, he sought out the Mexican painter Diego Rivera.

The outline of Rivera's mural shortly became clear. Workers waving the red flag marched triumphantly before Lenin's tomb. Gonorrhea microbes swam horribly above gin-swilling society dames. And so on. Soon the newspapers were giddily noting the irony—Leninist agitprop hanging in a citadel of free enterprise, paid for by the world's most famous capitalists! One night, the mural came quietly down, though Nelson remained defensive and apologetic about the incident to the end of his life.

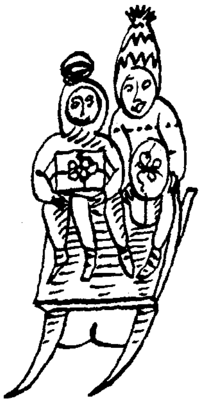
The pattern was clear: without an

SWISS STORIES

The work of the photographer Ernst Brunner, who focussed on a peasants' and workers' Switzerland nothing like the edelweiss version that tourists demand, has been compared to that of Dorothea Lange and other master American Farm Security Administration documentarians of the nineteen-thirties. His "Funeral Procession, Kippel" (on view in a show at the Swiss Institute until February 8th) feels close to a masterpiece in black-and-white—snow and steep mountainside, prayer and departure, suspended on a bridge of profound silence.

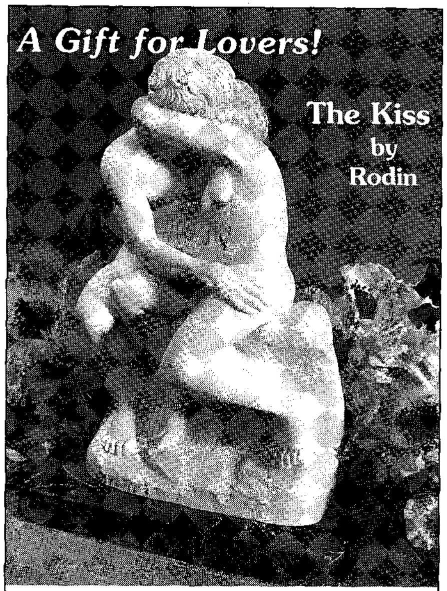
ideology of his own, Rockefeller was a sucker for the entreaties of ideologues, sometimes from the right (he was an ardent Cold Warrior) but far more often from the left. Being a Rockefeller made it all the more pleasurable to boast that some of his best friends were Democrats—most of them, in fact. When one of his advisers asked why he never switched parties, he replied, "If I became a Democrat, I'd always be in the position of holding the party back, whereas if I stayed a Republican, I'd be pushing the party forward." Thus the political credo, if such it was, of the Rockefeller Republicans: they were in favor of what Democrats favored, only less of it.

WHEN Republicans retook the White House with Eisenhower, in 1952, the Party's right wing saw a chance to undo the demon Roosevelt's welfare state. Rockefeller proposed an alternative: streamline it, make it more efficient, make it work. On his recommendation, Eisenhower consolidated the New Deal into a single Cabinet agency, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, where the programs were then nurtured and expanded with Republican approval. Nelson's specialty became the commission. He convened panels of Big Brains with glorious establishment names like Rostow, Kissinger, and Harriman, to chew over large, hazily defined matters like government reorganization and—from something called the Commission on Critical Choices for Americans—"a review of the fundamental philosophical and moral considerations of man and his institutions." With the utmost earnestness, they initiated strategies, strategized initiatives, formulized plans for action, and planned formulas for implementation, issuing them finally in massive tomes, which were largely unreadable and unread. And the status quo remained untouched, as may have been the goal to begin with.



Nelson achieved administrative power of his own in 1958, with his move to Albany. He may not have known what he wanted to do, but he was determined to do lots of it. And now it involved spending someone else's money, which made the act of spending even more enjoyable. New Yorkers, whose money it was, were less eager, and declined to approve a series of bond issues to finance Rockefeller's ambitious good works. He set up a system of semi-autonomous, quasi-governmental corporations to issue the bonds anyway. By the time he left Albany, in 1973, the agencies were collapsing under the debt. The fall of the dominoes ended in New York City's virtual bankruptcy two years later. Under Rockefeller, the tax burden had quadrupled; ditto the state debt. And, with schools failing, subways reeking, streets crumbling, New Yorkers could never really be sure what they had got for their money.

Rockefeller's governorship begins just as "Worlds to Conquer" ends, but another volume is coming. Reich's first shows impressive scholarship, but it must be said that, at eight hundred and seventy-five pages, this is a lot of Nelson Rockefeller. To gin up interest in his continuing labors, Reich writes in closing, "This was indeed something new in American politics: a phenomenon that, very soon, would permanently change the country's political landscape." Well, no. What's interesting about Rockefeller's breed of Republicans is that they changed almost nothing (beyond the debt ledgers of New York). As instruments of the post-New Deal status quo, they could not, in the end, withstand the assaults mounted by (to borrow from our current President) agents of change in the G.O.P., led first by Taft, then by Barry Goldwater, and finally—and irreversibly—by Ronald Reagan. The last gasp came when Gerald Ford chose Nelson for his Vice-President, only to dump him, two years later, for a candidate more amenable to the right wing: a young senator named Bob Dole. The country's political landscape was indeed changing, but it was changing under the well-shod feet of the Rockefeller Republicans. And very soon it would swallow them whole. ♦



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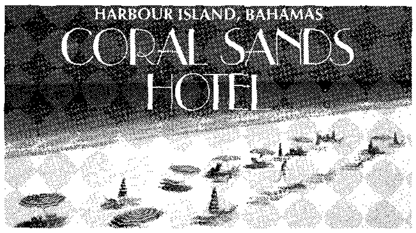

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BRIEFLY NOTED

FOOTSUCKER, by Geoff Nicholson (Overlook; $22.95). High arches, narrow ankles, rippling tendons: "That is the kind of foot I lust over. That is the kind of foot Catherine had." The fetishist narrating Nicholson's ninth novel is ecstatic when he finds this pedal paragon, but Catherine is disturbed by how much she likes having her feet slobbered over, and they are both disturbed by the shoemaker who keeps giving her irresistible shoes. Once again, this British author has found a most unlikely vehicle for his narrative peregrinations, which are both sinister and very funny.

UNFINISHED PEOPLE, by Ruth Gay (Norton; $27.50). Roughly a third of the Jews who came to this country between 1880 and 1920 were minors; many had been child laborers in Europe. The author, in an effort to correct the sentimentalities that have grown up around the shtetl and Jewish family life, argues that these destitute, uneducated children never understood either European or American society, and remembers her immigrant parents' life in the Bronx as ingrown and limited. Her homely details stress how little the immigrants asked of life, how little they received, and how their children had to discover the concept of happiness for themselves.

THE MATTER OF REVOLUTION: SCIENCE, POETRY, AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF MILTON, by John Rogers (Cornell; $39.95). The mid-seventeenth century in England was the era of William Harvey's "On the Circulation of the Blood," Thomas Hobbes's "Leviathan," and Robert Boyle's "corpuscular philosophy," among other extraordinary developments—all aspects of what Rogers calls the Vitalist Moment. Rogers, who moves easily between obscure scientific treatise and the poetry of Milton and Marvell, shows how thinking about physical motion—the relation between objects and systems—was enmeshed with thinking about political action, and suggests that the Vitalist Moment helped spawn what would become political liberalism.

MEMORY SLIPS, by Linda Katherine Cutting (HarperCollins; $24). In 1991, the author, a gifted young pianist, almost became the third sibling in her family to commit suicide. This book recounts her shockingly destructive childhood, the effects it had on her playing and on her marriage, and her eventual rehabilitation. For Cutting, the piano has always been a refuge. The correspondences she draws between music and life are sometimes forced, but she movingly presents both realms as opportunities for discipline and growth.

SUN UNDER WOOD, by Robert Hass (Ecco; $22). The poems in Hass's fourth collection—artfully assembled from prose, epigram, conversation, and free verse—prove both meditative and emotional. Hass is able to aestheticize loss without succumbing to either nostalgia or self-consciousness. Ranging widely, from obscure philology to dragonflies mating, his new poems are plangent and ecstatic: "I had the idea that the world's so full of pain / it must sometimes make a kind of singing."

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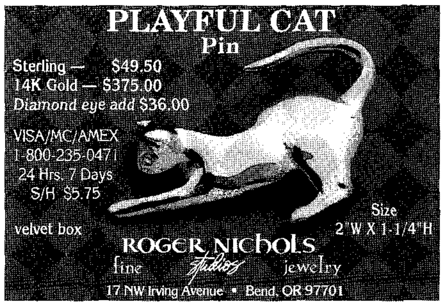

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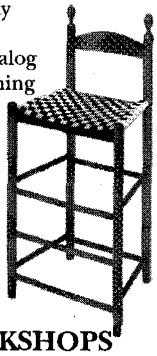
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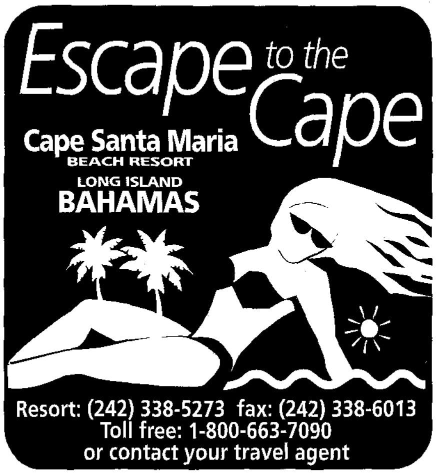

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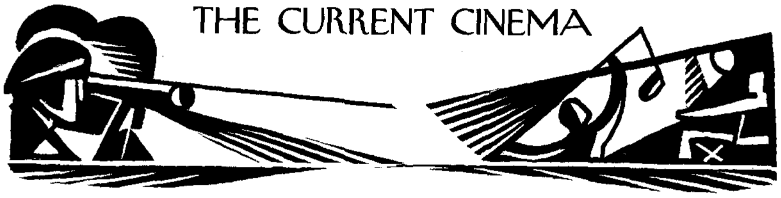


THE CURRENT CINEMA

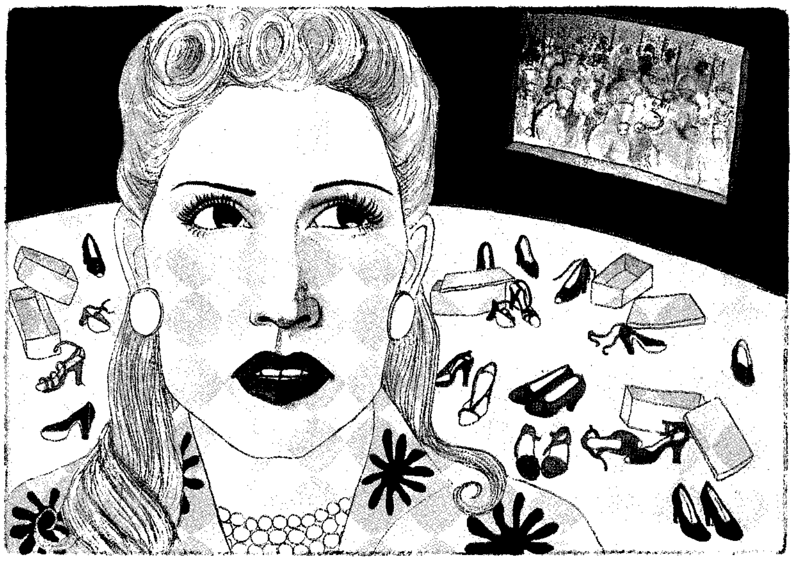
IMMATERIAL GIRLS

Evita Perón and Isabel Archer make the scene.

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE movie "Evita" is hardly a movie at all. In the experienced hands of the director Alan Parker, it is far more than a film version of a stage show, but what we should really be doing is watching this stuff on MTV. It's the biggest, loudest, most expensive music video ever made.

The story goes as follows: Eva Duarte (Madonna) grows up poor in provincial Argentina, hooks up with a guitar-strumming jerk (Jimmy Nail), goes to Buenos Aires, hooks up with further jerks, lands a big fish named Colonel Juan Perón (Jonathan Pryce), prods him along the march to power, becomes a power in her own right, wins acclaim and reverence as the First Lady of her nation, suffers, dies, and ascends into Heaven. One can imagine countless political, social, and sexual complications that could usefully embellish the tale, but "Evita," for all its sound and fury, is content to remain uncomplicated. It is in the business of mythmaking, and however hard it tries to promote argument about its heroine along the way, it begs us finally to adopt the same attitude toward her that we see in the rained-upon faces of the citizens who pray outside the palace while she fades. How can a modern movie arrive at something so close to beatification? Maybe because it gets there via kitsch.



Madonna doesn't act so much as pose—which approaches the weird self-invention practiced by the unknowable Evita.

Parker is not to blame; he has done more with the basic material than anyone could have expected. But, oh dear, the material. Apart from a mortifying school trip to "Jesus Christ Superstar," I have never been to an Andrew Lloyd Webber show; in that respect, at least, life has been good to me. Is there any form more bastard than rock opera? When Eva's passing is announced near the start of the film, we get an instant storm of grief from those onscreen, plus a thrashing jam of guitar runs, suggesting nothing so much as the encore to a Led Zeppelin concert circa 1973. Lloyd Webber lights on the occasional sweet melody, but the sheer smothering bombast of his orchestrations soon foams over it. Then there's the stuff in between the songs, the sung conversations that I hesitate to dignify with the name of recitative. This is where Tim Rice, the lyricist, comes into his own—where his cotton-candy vaporings and sticky clusters of syllables lodge in the craws of the stars. "When you act," Juan croons to Eva at their first meeting, "you take us away from the squalor of the real world." Some of us can't wait to get back.

The real world has been deposed and exiled from this picture. You catch more humanity from two minutes' worth of back-street joshing in Parker's previous music-laden movie, "The Commitments," than from the whole thunderous expanse of "Evita." Bodies of soldiers lie in neat rows beside a road; riots and putsches rise and fall like hemlines. The film boasts no more than three and a half main characters, while the working classes for whom Eva Perón is said to have given her life—and who were certainly agog at what that life had become—are abandoned as an abstraction, or egged on to form parading patterns. When Madonna hands them cash and blows them kisses, she doesn't look like a philanthropic saint who bleeds for her compatriots; she looks like, well, Madonna signing albums on tour.

The role of Eva Perón is ideal for Madonna, of course, since it seldom requires her to deliver her lines in normal human speech, which was never her forte. She has deepened her singing tone to cope with all the big, vibrating numbers, although I for one rather miss that old pop cheerfulness, not to mention the slutty slouch that came so naturally to her in "Desperately Seeking Susan." Her eye makeup and bone-white skin are right on target, and she has mastered the celebrated Evita wave, which involves crooking the elbow at sixty degrees and swivelling the palm toward her head, as if she were trying to unscrew the light bulb inside an invisible lampshade. Beyond that, she doesn't so much act as pose, which is more her scene anyway, and seems closer to the weird self-invention practiced by the unknowable Miss Duarte. The hour of Eva's death, at which she croaks a few last platitudes to her beloved Juan, is not remotely affecting, largely because we have no handle on the private existence of this woman, let alone on her immortal soul, which has long ago been bartered for the love of the mob.

Pryce's Perón is wonderfully nimble and quiet, with a touch of dry rot in his heart; he pounces on others' weakness and struggles to veil his own. But the movie tends to treat him, as it does Eva, as a living effigy, and the only person here who quickens the blood is Antonio Banderas. He enjoys himself immensely as Che, our official guide to the narrative, who sidles through almost every scene in the appropriate costume, from white tie and tails to peasant chic, singing very hard at the camera. Although Banderas doesn't have a wide range of expressions, most of them are matadorial and all of them are sexy, and he fights to resist not merely the Evita legend but the pomp of the film itself. Needless to say, it's a losing battle; by the end, he is tangoing with Eva and lining up to kiss her coffin. He caves in, just like the rest of us: "Evita" is fiercely efficient at manhandling our emotions, and Parker, together with his editor, Gerry Hambling, rises to an astounding swiftness and punch in some of the montages. But you can feel the rattle of images chaining you in; just as the Peronist cause slid toward Fascistic methods of persuasion and suppression, so there are times during this bullying and undeniably entertaining picture when you simply lie down and let it swagger all over you. It comes as no surprise to learn that Parker wrote the screenplay with Oliver Stone; I was hoping for some groovy, conspiratorial proof that Perón was alive and well and living in Vietnam. But, hey, you can't have everything.

THE opening of "The Portrait of a Lady," which is directed by Jane Campion, shows a bunch of beautiful young people in modern dress lying around on the grass and whispering of love. Is there some hot new Jamesian fragrance being advertised here—Europe, by Calvin Klein? I have a feeling that Campion is trying to reassure the audience that the forthcoming tale will be—dread word—"relevant" to the youth of today.

The rest of the film draws closer to the body of the book: the arrival in England of Isabel Archer (Nicole Kidman); the legacy from her uncle (John Gielgud), which sends her off to Italy; her marriage to Gilbert Osmond (John Malkovich), a professional exquisite; and her eventual flight to freedom. Also present are Isabel's other suitors: her cousin Ralph Touchett (Martin Donovan), his friend Lord Warburton (Richard E. Grant), and her American admirer, Caspar Goodwood (Viggo Mortensen). At one point, all three gentlemen start to fondle her on a bed, only to shimmer away like the crew of the starship Enterprise. Most exciting. It is plain to any Jamesian that the tale is tremulous at the prospect of erotic adventure, but to drag this backdrop to the front of the stage feels like an error, if not of taste at least of perspective. Campion and her screenwriter, Laura Jones, will certainly command respect for their intense feminist reading of the text, but they could also be accused of rigging the evidence: everything about this "Portrait of a Lady" is so stuffed and embroidered with visual significance that you find yourself fighting for air. Of course the novel deals with moral claustrophobia, but the movie is *only* about moral claustrophobia, and viewers who don't know the book will, I think, be rather bemused. They will ask pertinent questions such as: Why does Isabel marry someone who is so evidently the prince of darkness? Why does Rome look no lighter or more joyous than rain-racked England, even for a little while? And does *everyone* have tuberculosis and reddened eyes, or is it just Ralph?

Campion has got the events right, but she has lost the eventfulness—James's discreet grasp of romantic suspense. He hangs fire on the rapport between Osmond and Mme. Merle (Barbara Hershey, as my favorite voluptuary in all fiction), whereas Malkovich has his hand up Hershey's skirt from the start. We know what's going on, but poor Kidman, as Isabel, is left looking dumb for not guessing. The picture suffers, in fact, from all the faults that anti-Jamesians traditionally, and wrongly, ascribe to the Master: it is drawn out, overworked, packed with artsy energies that send it nowhere but keep it running furiously in place. This sad, slate-gray movie shows us nothing that we haven't already seen within the tauter and more passionate confines of "The Piano." Jane Campion has done something of which I never thought her capable: she has made a boring film. ♦

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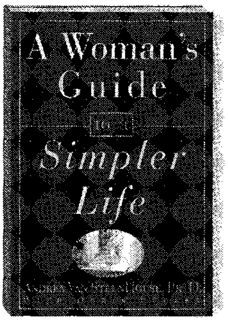

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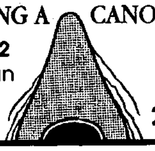

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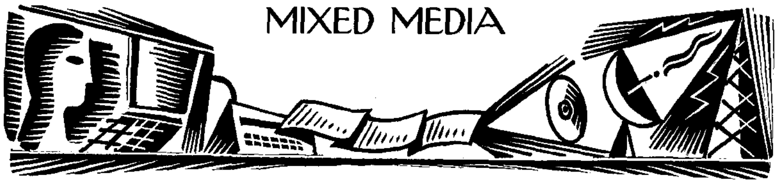


TOO MUCH PULP

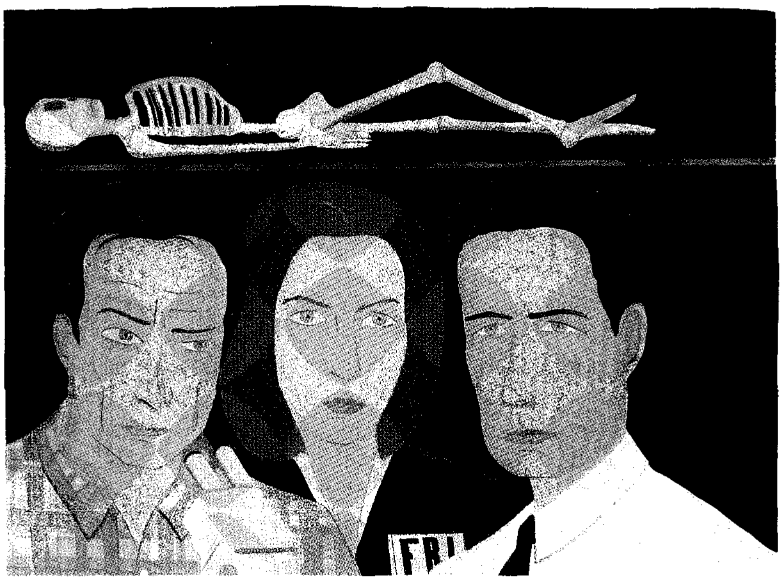
Chris Carter's metaphysical-fatigue syndrome.

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

CHRIS CARTER, the creator of "The X-Files" and "Millennium" (both on FOX), has carved out his own little meat department of metaphysical angst. Each week, his heroes descend into the valley of the shadow of death. In his mod-gothic melodramas, the human body becomes a chop shop of spare parts: amputated limbs, torn-out tongues, popped eyeballs, skin peeled off like fleshy Saran Wrap. Sometimes an entire body is crushed like a soda can or set aflame. The success of Carter's seduction technique lies in the queasy contrast between these gruesome horrors (the by-product of pulp story lines involving vampire feasts, alien autopsies, black Masses, and serial killings) and a lush, becalmed spirit of voyeurism so pure and intent that it borders on a trance state. Not since Michael Mann ("Miami Vice") and David Lynch ("Twin Peaks") has a single mind so altered the mood tones of TV. Carter's shows have their own expressionistic climate. "The X-Files" and "Millennium" are both shot in and around Vancouver, where the low ceilings and low, damp skies keep a lid on a lingering fog that mildews and wilts the corners of every image with free-floating dread. Even the sunlight looks a little ill.

As "The X-Files" has erupted from a cult hit for cool people into a worldwide craze, with marketing tie-ins, personal appearances that turn into near-riots, and a constant Internet frenzy, its stars have become living posters. Fame and adulation have licked David Duchovny to a fine finish that would look fatuously smug if he weren't sharp enough to play against it. (His self-deprecating appearances on "The Larry Sanders Show" go beyond good-sport geniality into true comic daring.) Gillian Anderson, as his partner, has become an axiom of the medium, as the French auteurists used to say—her beautiful chalk-white, spectral face hung like a lantern against the shrouded backdrops. Together, as F.B.I. agents Fox Mulder and Dana Scully, they've entered pop myth as romantically and irreversibly as Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock. Yet, for some of us early fans, something has gone awry in Chris Carter's purgatorial theme park. Just when "The X-Files" is at its ratings peak, it seems to have suffered an attack of brain drain.

What made "The X-Files" special when it débuted, in 1993, aside from its nifty premise (F.B.I. agents investigating paranormal activity), was its negative capability: its deadpan aplomb in the face of man-size flukes and alien fetuses; its eager willingness to enter into the weird spirit of each case study. Judgment was generally withheld. The show could lend sympathy to the victimizer (who was often a tormented soul) as well as the victims. So far this season, that sense of playful-worried fascination has been mostly junked. The show has become thick, bludgeoning. Duchovny's Fox Mulder, once a worthy successor to Sherlock Holmes, a quirky bachelor entranced by his own snappy brain, has been remodelled into an action hero with a mean streak; he now whops bad guys in the face or taunts them with the prospect of prison rape, and engages in creaky derring-do reminiscent of Robert Vaughn in "The Man from U.N.C.L.E." The coarsening of his character is part of the general downgrading of the show. More and more, "The X-Files" exploits gratuitous killing to an unconscionable degree; the nadir was reached this season in an episode where a trio of inbred backwoods mutations savagely beat a black couple to death to the ironic strains of a Johnny Mathis tune. The series is so busy testing our gag reflexes that it has tossed simple logic out the window. A recent two-parter, which began promisingly, with a Martian rock as a biohazardous McGuffin, broke down into a heap of head-scratching "Huh?"s. At one point, a Senate hearing is held to determine Mulder's whereabouts (Scully has been locked up for loyally refusing to divulge anything), and when Mulder himself finally appears—bruised and woozy, having just made the world's fastest escape from a Russian Gulag—he isn't even questioned! He just takes a seat behind Scully, slumping heroically.



Henriksen, Anderson, and Duchovny: solving increasingly gruesome crimes in the gathering millennial gloom.

GEOFFREY PARKER

"THE X-FILES" enjoyed the advantage of becoming a sleeper hit, accumulating an audience and escalating in its shock effects as it went along. It creeped and seeped into the system. But, with its success, Carter found himself in the predicament of having to top himself. The pounding promotional hoopla for "Millennium" has prevented it from building slowly, forcing it to come big out of the box. (Its title alone is a Major Statement.) Although the first episode earned high ratings, the series has not inspired the nutty devotion of "The X-Files." While Mulder and Scully have a platonic bond that fosters significant eye contact and enough sublimation to power a motorboat, Lance Henriksen—as Frank Black, a former law enforcer tormented by psychic vision (subliminal flashbacks of atrocities)—can only look within. Always in the midst of a mental crucifixion, he is a one-man misery index, who sees and senses what nobody else senses and sees. Even when he's at home exchanging platitudes with his wife (Megan Gallagher), or on the job with the other crime fighters, he's an abject loner, a gnawed-on stick of death. His hell-and-back voice makes his most casual pronouncement sound like a Zen koan. In the première, while briefing a roomful of detectives he told them that the serial killer doesn't see the world as we do. How does he see it? someone asked. "Differently," Frank said. He turns every line into an utterance.

The doomy milieu of "Millennium" is impressive. Like "X-Files," the show casts a spell, looking and moving as if it were a prose poem of infernal night, with embers still flickering under the toxic fumes. Its crumbling, back-door-satanic urbanscape owes a lot to "Seven," which is proving to be one of the most influential movies of the decade. But thus far "Millennium" hasn't been able to fight its way out of its own visual funk. It's so atmospheric that it's oppressive. Where "The X-Files" offers comic relief, not only in bantering asides but in full-length episodes (especially those written by the madcap sickie Darin Morgan), "Millennium" retains a steadfast mope. It isn't that Henriksen can't do comedy—he was quite funny as the exasperated villain in John Woo's "Hard Target." It's that the show has been conceived as a mission, a Manichaean struggle between good and evil, which doesn't leave much breathing room for sex appeal or comic relief. It's too preoccupied with pain, both personal and global.

"Millennium" does top "X-Files" in its garish mortification of the flesh. In the première episode, a homophobic serial killer was able to abduct his victims from a popular cruising spot, amputate their hands and sew up their eyes and mouths, bury them alive, set them on fire, and still work in a pathology lab—busy, busy, busy. The show that was broadcast the day after Thanksgiving (that warm family time) involved a killer who tortured and killed religious figures. ("You think that you can get rid of your pain by slaughtering the faith that's inside you," Frank told the culprit, which sounded a little pat.) I knew I had reached my limit with "Millennium" after an episode about a stalker who preyed upon the recently bereaved. The psychopathic predators on the show barely have personalities; they're just the opaque sum of their pathologies, not evil itself but prototypes of evil. Much is made of entering into the mind of the killer, but what's in a killer's mind is mostly muck and ritual. You don't get inside a killer—you get outside him, to chart his activities. The actual methodology of these serial-killer sagas is to study the murders as if you were poring over a problematic text (the urtext often being a Biblical passage, a nursery rhyme, a recipe), then decode that text and divine the pattern. It's the hermeneutics of homicide. The nasty déjà-vus that Frank suffers do little to solve his cases; their purpose is to let in enough anguish to keep the crackling flames of Hell alive.

The irony is that "Millennium" was intended to be an optimistic program, an antidote to the apocalyptic gloom and jitters collecting around the prospect of the year 2000. The Millennium Group, after all, is a benign conspiracy, a cabal of good guys meant to offset Cancer Man and the other sinister shadow-government trenchcoats on "The X-Files." But "Millennium" itself seems clinically depressed, and is now infecting "The X-Files" with its sense of futility. In the past, hip shows like "Miami Vice" and "Wiseguy" also succumbed to existential malaise, which may be nothing more than a fancy form of fatigue. I don't think Chris Carter despairs of the future; I suspect that he's plumb tuckered out from the effort of keeping two separate hour-long dramas creatively cooking. Like his hero in "Millennium," Carter is a visionary with a heavy workload. It's not a fun position to be in, but it needn't become martyrdom. ◆

SHOUTS & MURMURS

TAKE IT FROM ME

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

WHILE the rest of you loudly and meaninglessly celebrate the New Year—I'm not judging, I'm just making an observation—I prefer to reflect quietly on the lessons I've learned or partially absorbed or once thought I heard someone talking about as I was going down the street trying to get to the hardware store before it closed. Though we all know that the words we shout into the wind are like footprints in the sand, that does not stop us from going to the beach, even during peak burning hours; and though our chances of making a lasting impression on the world are like the chances of finding enough snow to make a snowball on a hot day, that does not prevent us from sometimes feeling chilly even when we are wearing a sweater. In this spirit, whatever it is, I would like to share some of the accumulated wisdom of my years, which, like the result of the woolgatherer's efforts, has become a big ball of wool. It may be too late for me—I'm not saying it is and I'm not saying it isn't—but if I can help just one person, even if it's someone I really don't like or am not speaking to or have sued, then I will not have lived in vain. Now let's move on—I have to be somewhere in a half hour.

So what are we talking about here? Practical stuff. For example, don't wait until you're forty to have nude pictures taken of yourself. If you plan to be famous, or even if you don't, make sure you get this out of the way while you're in your late teens or, at the very latest, early twenties. They'll keep! All you have to do is stay in touch with the photographer to make sure he has stored them properly and is ready to distribute them at a moment's notice. One phone call a year—*Hi. How ya doin'? Just wanted to make sure you still have the pictures. O.K. Great, yeah, I'll do that. O.K., you too. Right. Buh-bye.* How hard is that? I waited until my face had "character" to have my pictures done. What was I thinking? Answer: I wasn't thinking.

It's an open secret that it is now fashionable to laugh at the idea of having fifteen minutes of fame. People! I, too, used to think, Oh, that doesn't apply to me, I'll be famous whenever I want to—the first two weeks of April, every August, after Mom moves into the home. I don't have to watch the clock, let the clock watch *me.* Well, I was caught napping, literally, and I found out too late that my fifteen minutes had come during an intense REM cycle while I was dreaming about— No, forget it, it doesn't matter what I was dreaming about. This isn't about me.

I'm not saying that I have all the answers—if I did I'd be laughing all the way to the bank instead of all the way in the opposite direction from the bank, until it becomes a tiny dot on the horizon and then disappears entirely. My whole point is: Do you want to miss your ice time, foul out before the game has begun, do an end run around yourself, be caught looking when the high heater comes over the fat part of the plate, just so you'll have an "interesting" dream about going into a tunnel to tell your shrink the next day? Maybe you do. But I don't think so. And, by the way, when they say fifteen minutes they mean fifteen minutes. It's the old story: "Sorry, we can't help you. If we made an exception for you, blah, blah, blah."

Look, I know this is all pretty obvious, and having to spell it out is almost as embarrassing for me as, in a completely unrelated way, it would be for you to tell your boss that you hate his guts, that you could run the company better than he can, that he can't fire you because you quit, and thanks for nothing, you jerk, you can go to hell. But you know you owe it to your boss to be honest with him, even if it's a wee bit painful—that's why he hired you. In the same way, I owe it to myself to be honest, at some point, with someone. It doesn't matter who—you let me worry about that.

What I have to say is simple. But that doesn't make it any less true. If anything, it makes it more true. It's simple—unless *you* make it complicated. If I've done my job here today, you will have achieved that heightened state of receptivity that lies midway between not paying much attention and not paying any attention. Or maybe you just think I'm a big phony. So be it. It's O.K. to have that feeling. But, right or wrong—they boil down to the same thing at the end of the day, if not by lunchtime, although of course it depends when you turned the flame on—I would rather not "know" about it, so if you have any brains you won't "tell" me about it. Not that brains are everything—you'll also need a skull to put them in. And, much as I'd like to help you out with that, I can't live your life for you. That much I do know. But that's neither here nor there. ♦

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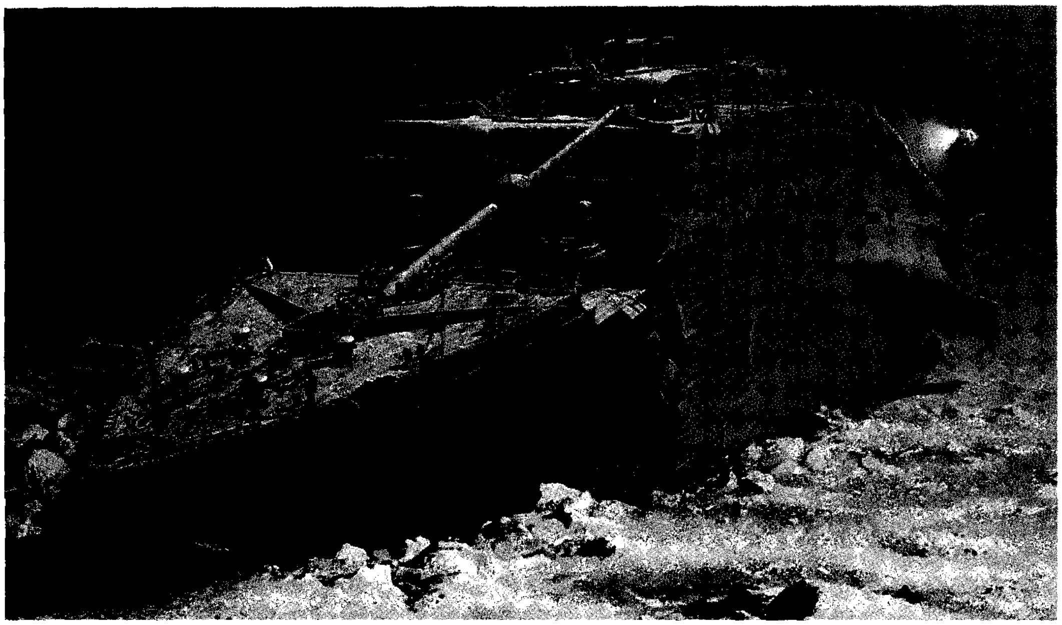

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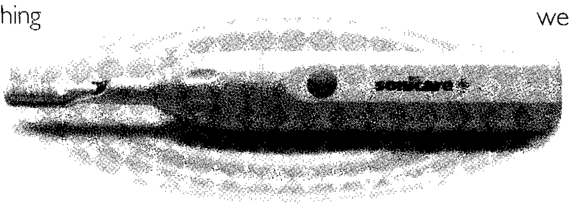

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